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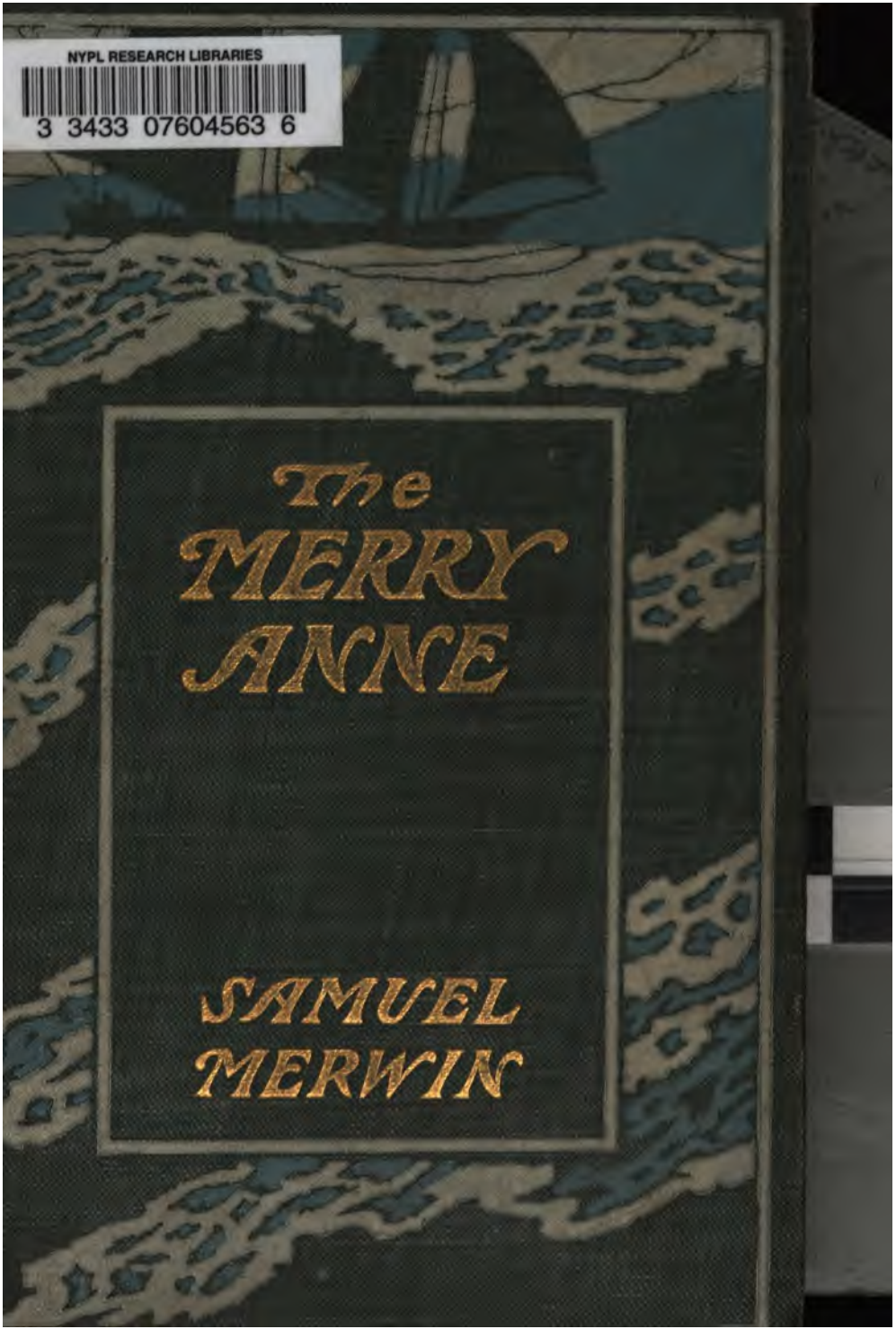

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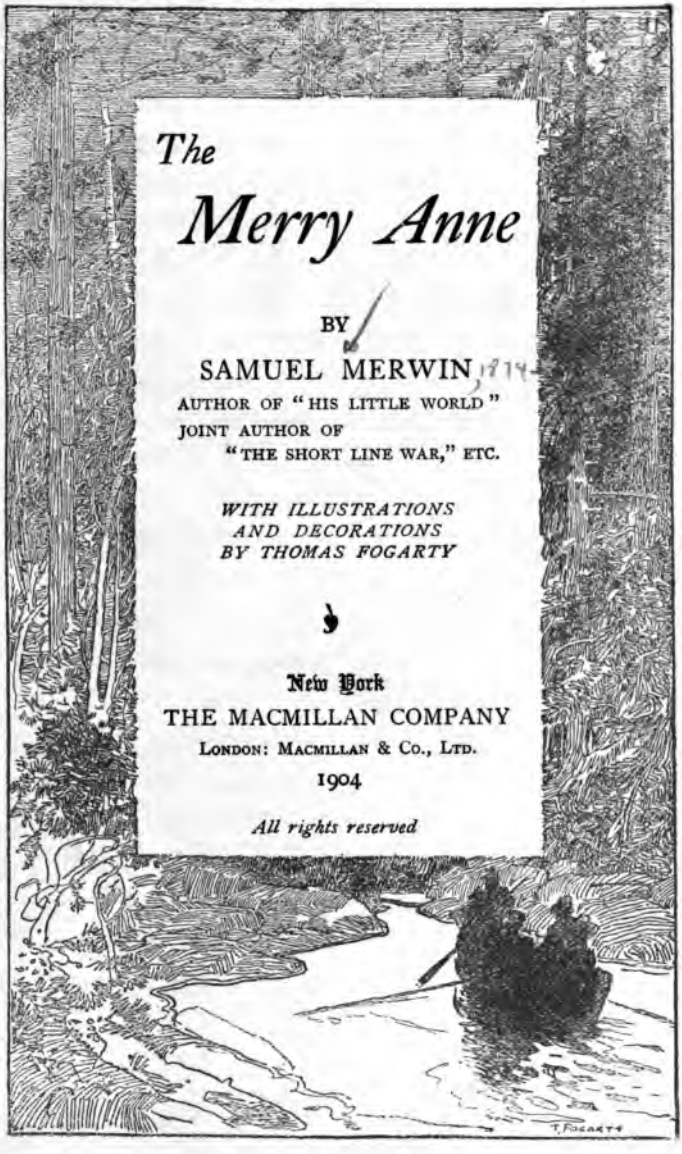
"She stood at the wheel, a very graceful creature."



The Merry Anne

BY

SAMUEL MERWIN

AUTHOR OF "HIS LITTLE WORLD"
JOINT AUTHOR OF
"THE SHORT LINE WAR," ETC.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS
AND DECORATIONS
BY THOMAS FOGARTY

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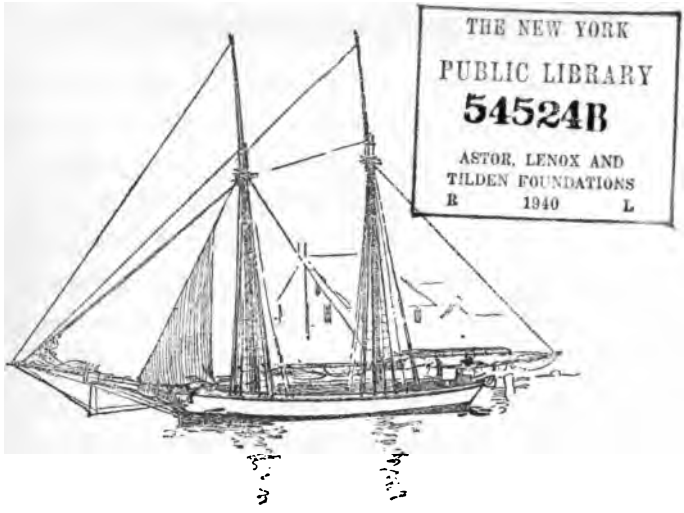

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Set up, electrotyped, and published April, 1904.

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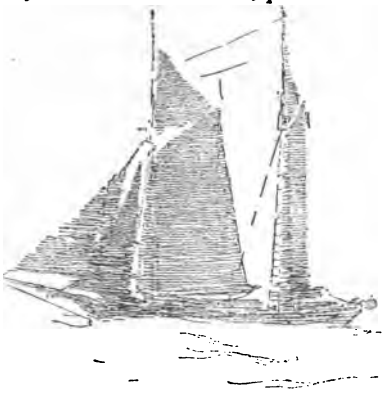
Norwood, Mass., U.S.A.

Dear H. K. W.:

This tale dedicates itself to you as a matter of right. For we grew up together on the bank of Lake Michigan; and you have not forgotten, over there in Paris, the real house on stilts, nor the miles we have tramped along the beach, — nor, I am sure, the grim old life-saver on the night patrol near Ludington, and his sturdy scorn for our student life-savers at Evanston. And the endless night on Black Lake, with Klondike Andrews at the tiller and never a breath of wind, — we shall not forget that. Once we differed: I failed to tempt you into a paddle in the Oki, *one fresh spring day three years ago; but then, your instinct of self-preservation always worked better than mine, as the adventure in the Swampscott dory will recall to you.*

But, after all, these doings do not make up the reason why the story is partly yours; nor do the changes in the text that sprang from your friendly comment. I will tell you the real reason. Early, very early, one summer morning, you and I stood on the wheel-house of the Père Marquette Steamer No. 4 — or was it the No. 3? — a few hours from Milwaukee. The Lake was still, the thick mist was faintly illuminated by the hidden sun. Of a sudden, while the steamer was throb-

bing through the silence, a motionless schooner, painted blue, with a man in a red shirt at the wheel, loomed through the mist, stood out for one vivid moment, then faded away. That schooner was the Merry Anne; *and the man at the wheel was Dick Smiley. What if he should some day chance upon this tale and declare it untrue? We know better, for we saw it there.*



S. M.

Netherwood, N.J.,
January, 1904.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	Dick and his *Merry Anne*	15
II.	The New Mate	41
III.	At the House on Stilts	69
IV.	The Circle Mark	91
V.	Burnt Cove	117
VI.	The Red Seal Label	145
VII.	Drawing Together	171
VIII.	The Evening of the Same Day	199
IX.	The Chase begins — Thursday Morning	227
X.	Thursday Night — the Gingham Dress	251
XI.	Thursday Night — Van Deelen's Bridge	291
XII.	The Meeting	319
XIII.	Whiskey Jim	345
XIV.	Harbor Lights	371
XV.	In which Beveridge surprises himself	401

ILLUSTRATIONS

"She stood at the wheel, a very graceful creature" *Frontispiece*

FACING PAGE

Henry Smiley 46

"Gazing into the square black hole" . . . 212

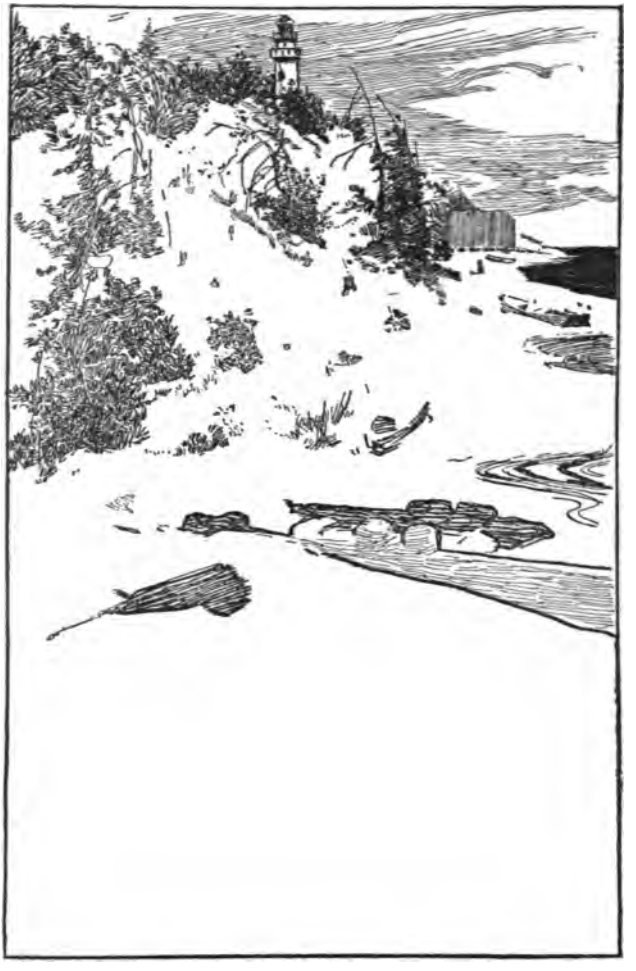
"The discovery of the gingham dress" . . 278

"The black forest shut in behind him" . . 304

"'Put up your guns, boys,' said Henry" . . 368

CHAPTER I

DICK AND HIS *MERRY ANNE*



THE *MERRY ANNE*

CHAPTER I

DICK AND HIS *MERRY ANNE*

THE *Merry Anne* was the one lumber schooner on Lake Michigan that always appeared freshly painted; it was Dick Smiley's wildest extravagance to keep her so. Sky blue she was (Annie's favorite color), with a broad white line below the rail; and to see her running down on the north wind, her sails white

in the sun, her bow laying the waves aside in gentle rolls to port and starboard, her captain balancing easily at the wheel, in red shirt, red and blue neckerchief, and slouch hat, was to feel stirring in one the old spirit of the Lakes.

It was a lowering day off Manistee. Out on the horizon, now and then dipping below it, a tug was struggling to hold two barges up into the wind. Within the harbor, at the wharf of the lumber company, lay the *Merry Anne*. Two of her crew were below, sleeping off an overdose of Manistee whiskey. The third, a boy of seventeen, got up in slavish imitation of his captain, — red shirt, slouch hat, and all, — was at work lashing down the deck load. Roche, the mate, stood on the wharf, the centre of a little group of stevedores and rivermen. "Hi there, Pink," he shouted at the red shirt, "what you doin' there?"

The boy threw a sweeping glance lakeward before replying, "Makin' fast."

"That'll do for you. There won't be no start *this* afternoon."

"But Cap' Smiley said—"

"None o' your lip, or I'll Cap' Smiley you."

"Pretty ugly, out there, all right enough," observed a riverman. "Comin' up worse, too. Give you a stiff time with all that stuff aboard."

"I ain't so sure about that," said Roche, with a swagger. "If *I* was cap'n o' this schooner, she'd start on the minute, but Smiley's one o' your fair-weather sort."

"Sure he is. He done a heap o' talkin' about that time he brung the *William Jones* into Black Lake before the wind, the day the *John T. Eversley* was lost; but Billy Underdown was sailin' with him then, and he told me hisself that he had the wheel all the way —Smiley never done a thing but hang on to the companionway and holler at him to look out for the north set o' the surf outside the piers; and there's my little Andy that ain't nine year old till the sixth o' September, could ha' told him the surf sets south off Black Lake, with a northwest wind. If it hadn't been for Billy, the Lord only knows where Dick Smiley'd be to-day."

A tug hand had joined the group, and now he addressed himself to Roche.

"Cap'n Peters wants to know if you're a-goin' to try to make it, Mr. Roche."

"Not by a dam' sight."

"Well — I guess he won't be sorry to wait till mornin'. What time do you think you'll want us?"

"Six o'clock sharp."

"Them's Cap'n Smiley's orders, is they?"

"Them's *my* orders, and they're good enough for you."

"Oh, that's all right, of course, only Cap'n Peters, he said if 'twas anybody else, he'd just tie up and wait, but there ain't never any tellin', he says, what Dick Smiley'll take it into his head to do."

"You tell your cap'n that Mr. Roche said to come at six in the mornin'."

"All right. I'll tell him. Say — Cap'n Smiley ain't anywhere around, is he?"

"*No, Cap'n Smiley ain't anywheres around!*" mimicked Roche, angrily. "If you want to know whereabouts Cap'n Smiley is, he's uptown skylarkin', that's where *he* is."

The river hands laughed at this.

"I reckon he's somethin' of a hand for the ladies, Dick Smiley is, with them blue eyes o' his'n," said one. "I ain't a-tellin', you understand, but there's boys in town here that could let you know a thing or two if they was minded."

As a matter of fact, Dick was at that moment in an up-town jewellery shop, fingering a necklace of coral.

"I want a longer one," he was saying, "with something pretty hanging on the end of it — there, that's the boy — the one with big rough beads and the red rose carved on the end."

"Must be somebody's birthday, Captain," observed the jeweller, with a wink.

And Dick, who could never resist a wink, replied: "That's what. Day after to-morrow, too, and I haven't any too much time to make it in."

"Here's a nice piece — if she likes the real red."

Dick took it in his hands and nodded over it. "I think that would please her. She likes bright colors." He drew a wallet from a hip pocket and disclosed a thick bundle of bills.

"I shouldn't think you'd like to carry so much money on you, Captain, in your line of work."

"It isn't so much. They are most all ones." But the jeweller, seeing a double X on the top, only smiled and remarked that it was a dark day.

"Yes, too dark. I don't like it. Makes me think of the cyclone three years ago April, when the *Kate Howard* went down off Lakeville. I spent three hours roosting on the topmast that day. It was black then, like this. If it keeps up, you'll have to turn on your lights in here."

"Guess I will. It wouldn't hurt now. Well, good-by, Captain. Drop in again next time you run in here."

"All right. But there's no telling when that will be. I have to go where Captain Stenzenberger sends me, you know."

"You don't own your schooner yet, then?"

"No; only a quarter of it. Well, good-by." And he left the shop with the corals, securely wrapped, stowed in an inside pocket.

The first big drops of rain were falling when he reached the schooner. The deck was

deserted, but he found Roche and his wharf acquaintances settled comfortably in the cabin. Their talk stopped abruptly at the sight of his boots coming down the companionway.

"Why isn't the load lashed down, Pete?" he asked, addressing Roche.

"Why — oh, it was lookin' so bad, I thought we'd better wait till you come."

"Where's the tug? Don't Peters know we want him?"

The loungers were silent. All looked at Roche.

"Why, yes — sure. He ain't showed up yet, though."

"You ain't goin' to try to make it, are you, Cap'n?" asked a riverman.

"Going to try? We *are* going to make it, if that's what you mean."

One of the men rose. "I'm going up the wharf, Cap'n. If you like, I'll speak to Peters."

"All right. I wish you would. And say, Pete, you take Pink and see that everything is down solid. I don't care to distribute those two-by-fours all down the east coast."

Roche went out, and the others got up one

by one and took shelter in the lee of a lumber pile on the wharf. A little later, when he saw the tug steaming up the river, Roche shook the rain from his eyes and looked long at the black cloud billows that were rolling up from the northwest, then he slipped below and took a strong pull at his flask. The tug came alongside, and then Roche sought Dick.

"Cap'n, what's the use?" he said in an agitated voice. "Don't you see we're runnin' our nose right into it? Why, if we was a three-hundred-footer, we'd have our hands full out there. I don't like to say nothin', but —"

Smiley, his hat jammed on the back of his head, his shirt, now dripping wet, clinging to his trunk and outlining bunches of muscle on his shoulders and back, his light hair stringing down over his forehead, merely looked at him curiously.

"You see how it is, Cap'n, I —"

"What are you talking about? All right, Pink, make fast there! Who's running this schooner, you or me?"

"Oh, I don't mean nothin', Cap'n; but seein' there ain't no particular hurry —"

"No hurry! Why, man, I've got to lay alongside the Lakeville pier by Wednesday night, or break something. What's the matter with you, anyhow? Lost your nerve?"

"No, I ain't lost my nerve. And you ain't got no call to talk that way to me, Dick Smiley."

"Here, here, Pete, none of that. We're going to pull out in just about two minutes. If you aren't good for it, I'll wait long enough to tumble your slops ashore. Put your mind on it now — are you coming or not?"

"Oh, I'm comin', Cap'n, of course, but —"

"Shut up, then."

The idlers on the wharf had not heard what was said, but they saw Roche change color and duck below for another pull at his flask.

The tug swung out into the stream; the *Merry Anne* fell slowly away from the wharf.

"Call up those loafers, Pete," shouted Smiley, as he rested his hands on the wheel. The two sailors, roused by a shake and an oath, scrambled drowsily upon the deck with red eyes and unsettled nerves, and were set to work raising the jib and double-reefing foresail and mainsail. Captain Peters sounded

three blasts for the first bridge, and headed down-stream.

Passing on through the narrow draws of the bridges and between the buildings that lined the river, the *Merry Anne* drew near to the long piers that formed the entrance to the channel. And Roche, standing with flushed face by the foremast, looked out over the piers at the angry lake, now a lead-gray color, here streaked with foam, there half obscured by the driving squalls. His eyes followed the track of one squall after another as they tore their way at right angles to the surf.

Already the *Anne* had begun to stagger. At the end of the towing hawser the tug was nosing into the half-spent rollers that got in between the piers, and was tossing the spray up into the wind.

One of the life-saving crew, in shining oil-skins, was walking the pier; he paused and looked at them — even called out some words that the wind took from his lips and mockingly swept away. Roche looked at him with dull eyes; saw his lips moving behind his hollowed hands; looked out again at the muddy streaks and the whirling mist, out

beyond at the two barges laboring on the horizon, gazed at the white and yellow surf. Then his eye lighted a little, and he made his way back to the wheel.

"Don't be a fool, Dick," he shouted. "Just look a' that and tell me you can make it. I know better. I'm an old friend, Dick, and I like you better'n anybody, but you mustn't be a dam' fool. Ain't no use bein' a dam' fool."

"Who are you talking to?"

"Lemme blow the horn, Dick. 'Taint too late to stop 'em. We can get back all right — start in the mornin'. Don't you see, Dick —"

Smiley's eyes were fixed keenly on him for a moment; then they swept to the windward pier. He snatched the horn from Roche's hand and blew a blast.

The sailors up forward heard it, and shouted and waved their arms. A tug hand, seeing the commotion, though he heard nothing, finally was made to understand, and Captain Peters slowed his engines. Smiley, meanwhile, was steering up close to the windward pier.

"Tumble off there, Pete," he ordered. "Quick, now."

"What you going to do to me? Ain't goin' to put me off there, are you?"

"Get a move on, or I'll throw you off. There's no room for you here."

"Hold on there, Dick; I ain't got no clothes or nothin'. And you owe me my pay—"

"You'll have to go to Cap'n Stenzenberger about that. Here, Pink, heave him off. Quick, now!"

"Don't you lay your hand on me, Pink Harper—"

But the words were lost. The young sailor in the red shirt fairly pitched him over the rail. The life saver, running alongside, gave him a hand. Captain Peters was leaning out impatiently from his wheel-house door, and now at the signal he dove back and hurriedly rang for full steam ahead; it was no place to run chances. And as the schooner passed out into the open lake, leaving the lighthouse behind her, and soon afterward casting off the tug, there was no time to look back at the raging figure on the pier. Though once, to be sure, Dick had turned with a laugh and shouted out a few lines of a wild parody on the song of the day, "Baby Mine."

The song proved so amusing that, when they were free of the tug and were careening gayly off to the southwest with all fast on board and a boiling sea around them, he took it up again. And braced at a sharp angle with the deck, one eye on the sails, another cast to windward, his brown hands knotted around the spokes of the wheel, he sang away at the top of his lungs: —

> "He is coming down the Rhine.
> With a bellyful of wine."

Young Harper worked his way aft along the upper rail. His eye fell on the figure of his captain, and he laughed and nodded.

"Lively goin', Cap'n."

Lively it certainly was.

"Guess there ain't no doubt about *our* makin' it!"

"Doubt your uncle!" roared the Captain. And he winked at his young admirer.

"Guess Mr. Roche didn't like the looks of it."

"Guess not."

Harper crept forward again. And Smiley, with a laugh in his eye, squared his chest to

the storm, and thought of the necklace stowed away in the cabin; and then he thought of her who was to be its owner day after to-morrow, and "I wonder if we will make it," thought he; "I wonder!"

And make it they did. Sliding gayly up into a humming southwest wind, with every rag up and the sheets hauled home, with the bluest of skies above them and the bluest of water beneath (for the Lakes play at April weather all around the calendar), Wednesday afternoon found them turning Grosse Pointe.

The bright new paint was prematurely old now, the small boat was missing from the stern davits, the cabin windows had been crushed in, and one sailor carried his arm in a sling, but they had made it. Harper, hollow-eyed, but merry, had the wheel; Smiley was below, snatching his first nap in forty-eight hours, with the red corals under his head.

"Ole," called Harper, "wake up the Cap'n, will you? I can't leave the wheel. He said we was to call him off Grosse Pointe."

So Ole called him, and was soon followed back on deck by another hollow-eyed figure.

"Guess it's just as well Mr. Roche didn't

come along," observed the boy, as he relinquished the wheel. "*He'd* 'a' had all he wanted, and no mistake."

"He had enough to start with. There wasn't any room for drunks this trip."

As he spoke, Smiley was running his eye over the familiar yellow bluffs, glancing at the lighthouse tower, at the stack of the water works farther down the coast, at the green billows of foliage with here and there a spire rising above them, and, last and longest, at the two piers that reached far out into the Lake, — one black with coal sheds, the other and nearer, yellow with new lumber.

Between these piers, built in the curve of the beach and nestling under the bluff, was a curious patchwork of a house. Built of odds and ends of lumber, even, in the rear, of driftwood, perched up on piles so that the higher waves might run up under the kitchen floor, small wonder that the youngsters of the shore had dubbed it "the house on stilts."

Old Captain Fargo (and who was not a "Captain" in those days!) had built it with his own hands, just as he had built every one of the sailboats and rowboats that strewed the

beach, and had woven every one of the nets that were wound on reels up there under the bluff.

A surprisingly spacious old house it was, too, with a room for Annie upstairs on the Lake side, looking out on a porch that was just large enough to hold her pots and boxes of geraniums and nasturtiums and forget-me-nots.

Smiley could not see the house yet; it was hidden by the lumber piles on the pier. But his eyes knew where to look, and they lingered there, all the while that his sailor's sixth sense was watching the set of the sails and the scudding ripples that marked the wind puffs. He wore a clean red shirt to-day and a neckerchief that lay in even folds around his neck. Redolent of soap he was, his face and hands scrubbed until they shone. And still his eyes tried to look through fifty feet of lumber to the little flowering porch, until a sail came in sight around the end of the pier. Then he straightened up, and shifted his grip on the spokes.

The small boat was also blue with a white stripe. At the stern sat a single figure. But

though they were still too far apart to distinguish features, Dick knew that the figure was that of a girl — a girl of a fine, healthy carriage, her face tanned an even brown, and a laugh in her black eyes. He knew, even before he brought his glass to bear on her, that she was dressed in a blue sailor suit, with a rolling blue-and-white collar cut V-shape and giving a glimpse of her round brown neck. He knew that her black hair was gathered simply with a ribbon and left to hang about her shoulders, that her arms were bared to the elbow. He could see that she was carrying a few yards more sail than was safe for a catboat in that breeze, and there was a laugh in his own eyes as he shook his head over her recklessness. He knew that it would do no good to speak to her about it; and her father and mother had never been able to look upon her with any but fond, foolish eyes.

Steadily the *Merry Anne* drew in toward the pier; rapidly the *Captain* — so Annie called her boat — came bobbing and skimming out to meet her. A few moments more and Dick could wave his hat and shout, "Ahoy, there!" And he heard in reply, as he had known that

he should, a merry "Ahoy, there! I'll beat you in!" And then they raced for it, Annie gaining, as she generally could, while the schooner was laboriously coming about, and working in slowly under reduced sail. She ran in close to the pier, came up into the wind, and waited there while the crew were making the schooner fast.

At length the stevedores started unloading the lumber and Dick was free. He leaned on the rail and looked down at Annie who had by this time come alongside; and he saw that she had a bunch of blue-and-white forget-me-nots in her hair.

"Well," she said, looking up, and driving all power of consecutive thought out of Dick's head, as she always did when she rested her black eyes full on his, "well, I beat you."

"Take me aboard, Annie. I've got something for you."

"All right, come down. You can take the sheet."

Dick pushed off from the schooner's side and the *Captain* filled away toward the shore.

"Hold on, Annie, come about. I don't have to go in yet."

"Where do you want to go?"

"I don't care — run out a little way."

Annie brought her about and Dick watched her with admiring eyes. "Well, now," he began, as they settled down for a run off the wind, "I didn't know whether I was going to get here to-day or not."

"It *was* pretty bad."

"You were thinking of me, weren't you, Annie?"

She smiled and gave her attention to the boat.

"Roche was drunk, and I had to leave him at Manistee."

"You didn't come down shorthanded, did you, Dick, — in that storm?"

He nodded.

"But how? You couldn't have got much sleep."

"I didn't get any till this noon."

"Now, that's just like you, Dick, always running risks when you don't have to."

"But I did have to."

"I don't see why."

"What day's to-day?"

A mischievous light came into her eyes,

but her face was demure. "Wednesday," she replied.

"Yes, I knew that."

"Why did you ask me, then?"

"Oh, Annie, Annie! When are you going to stop talking that way?"

Again the boat claimed all her attention. He leaned forward and dropped his voice.

"Don't you think I've waited most long enough, Annie?"

"Now, Dick, be sensible."

"But haven't I been sensible? Not a word have I said for two months. And I told you then I would speak on your birthday."

"So you really remembered my birthday?"

"Remembered it, Annie! What a girl you are! Do you know how long I've been waiting? And all the boys laughing? It's two years this month. It was on your birthday that I saw you first, you know. And it wasn't a month after that that I spoke to you. How could I help it? Who could have waited longer? And you, with your way of making me think you were really going to say yes, and then just laughing at me."

"Now, Dick — if you don't stop and be sensible, I'll take you straight inshore."

"Oh, you wouldn't do that, Annie?"

"Yes, I would. I will now. Ready about!"

The *Captain* came rapidly up into the wind, but stopped there with sail flapping; for Dick held the sheet, and his hand had imprisoned hers on the tiller.

"Now, Dick — Dick —"

"Wait a minute. Don't be angry with me when I've risked the schooner and everybody aboard her just so's to get down here on your birthday. Promise me you'll hold her in the wind while I get you your present."

She hesitated, and looked out toward the horizon.

"Promise me that, Annie, and I'll let go your hand."

"You — you've forgotten — what you promised —"

"I know, I said I'd never take hold of your hand again until you put it in mine — didn't I?"

She nodded, still looking away.

"And I've broken the promise. Do you know why, Annie? It's because when you

look at me the way you do sometimes, I could break every promise I've ever made — and every law of Congress if I thought it would just keep you looking at me."

Not a word from Annie.

"Promise me, Annie, that you'll hold her here?"

Still no word.

"Won't you just nod, then?"

She hesitated a moment longer, then gave one uncertain little nod. He released her hand, held the sheet between his knees, drew the package from his pocket, and displayed the corals. She was trying bravely not to look around, but her glance wavered, and finally she turned and looked at it with eager eyes.

"Oh, Dick, did you bring that for me?"

"I surely did." He held it up, and when she bent her head forward, he slipped it over and around her neck. Her eyes shone as she ran the red beads through her fingers and looked at the carved pendant. Dick leaned back and watched her contentedly. Finally she let her eyes steal upward and meet his, with a smile that was half roguish. "I never really laughed at you, did I, Dick?"

He moved forward with sudden eagerness. "Don't you think now is a good time to say yes, Annie, — now, on your birthday? I own a quarter of the schooner now, you know; and I'm ready to make another payment to-morrow. And don't you see, when we're married you can help me to save, and before we know it we can have a home and a business of our own."

She was bending over the corals. "You didn't really think you could save more with — with me, than you could alone, did you, Dick?"

"Yes, I'm sure of it. It will give me something to work for, don't you see?"

"But — but —" very shyly, this — "Haven't you anything to work for now?"

"Oh, Annie, do you mean that — are you telling me you'll give me the right to work for you? That's all I want to know."

"Now, Dick — please let go my hand — you promised, you know —"

"What is a promise now! If you knew how you torture me when you lead me on till I'm half wild and then change around till I don't know what I've said or what you've said or hardly who I am —"

"No, Dick, you mustn't — I mean it. We must go in. See, there's father on the beach. It must be supper-time."

"Wait a minute — I haven't half told you — "

But she was merciless. The *Captain* came about and headed shoreward.

"Did you meet the revenue cutter anywhere up the Lake — the *Foote?* She was here yesterday."

"There you are again, all changed around! What do I care about the *Foote* — when I'm just waiting to hear you say the only word that can make my life worth living. Now, Annie — "

"You mustn't, Dick. I've let you say too much now. If you go on, you'll make me feel that I can't even thank you for your present."

"Was that all? Were you only thanking me? "

She nodded, and Dick's face fell into gloom. But when the *Captain* was beached, and Annie had leaped lightly over the rail, she turned and gave him one merry blushing look that completely reversed the effect of her reproof. And as she hurried up to the house, he could only gaze after her helplessly.

CHAPTER II

THE NEW MATE

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THE NEW MATE

IN the morning the *William Schmidt*, Henry Smiley, Master, came in from Chicago and tied up across the pier from the *Merry Anne*.

Henry, Dick's cousin, was a short, stocky, man, said to be somewhat of a driver with his sailors. He seldom had much to say, never drank, was shrewd at a bargain, and was supposed to have a considerable sum stowed away in the local savings bank. Though he was wanting in the qualities that made his younger cousin popular, he was daring enough in his quiet way, and he had been known, when he thought the occasion justified it, to run long chances with his snub-nosed schooner.

After breakfast Dick walked across the broad pier between the piles of lumber, and found Henry in his cabin. They greeted each other cordially.

"Sit down," said Henry. "Did you come down through that nor'wester?"

Dick nodded.

"Have any trouble?"

"Oh, no. Lost some sleep — that's all. You aren't going down to the yards to-day, are you?"

"Yes — I think likely. Why?"

"I'll go along with you. I'm ready to make another payment on the schooner. I've been thinking it over, and it strikes me I'm paying about three times what she's worth. What do you think? Would it do any harm to have a little talk about it with the Cap'n? You know him better than I do."

Henry shook his head. "I wouldn't. He is too smart for you. He will beat you any way you try it, and have you thanking him before he is through with you. I have gone all over this ground before, you know. Of course he is an old rascal — but I don't know of any other way you could even get an interest in a schooner. You see, you haven't any capital. He will give you all the time you want, and I don't know but what he's entitled to a little extra, everything considered. But don't

say anything, whatever you do. You've got too good a thing here."

"You think I ought to just shut up and let him bleed me?"

"He isn't bleeding you. Just think it over, Dick. You are making a living, and you already have a quarter interest in your schooner. You couldn't ask much more at your age. Have you heard from him yet, by the way?"

"No."

"He spoke to me the other day about wanting to see you when you came in. There's another order to come down from Spencer."

"Where's that?"

"Up in the Alpena country."

"Lake Huron, eh? Oh — isn't that where you went in the spring?"

"Yes, I've been there. An old fellow named Spencer runs a little one-horse mill, and he's selling timber and shingles. And from what the Cap'n said, I don't think he'd care if you brought along a little venture of your own. That's the way I used to do, when I was paying for the *Schmidt*."

"How could I do that?"

"Spencer will give you a little credit. You can stow away a few thousand feet, and clear twenty or thirty dollars. It helps along."

"All right, I'll try it. Are you sure the old man won't care?"

"Oh, yes. He's willing enough to do the square thing, so long as it keeps us feeling good and doesn't lose him anything."

"Say — there's another thing, Henry. I fired Roche, up at Manistee."

"Fired him?" Henry's brows came together.

"Yes, I had to. I had stood him as long as I could."

"I don't know what the Cap'n will say about that."

"I'd like to know what he can say. I was in command."

"Yes, I know — of course you had a right to; but the thing is to keep on his good side. Suppose we go right down to the yards, and see if you can get your story in before Roche's."

"What does the Cap'n care about my men, I'd like to know!"

THOMAS FOGARTY

Henry Smiley.

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"Now, keep cool, Dick. Roche, you see, used to work for him, — I don't know but what they're related, — and it was because the Cap'n spoke to me about him that I recommended him to you when I did. And look here, Dick," — Henry smiled as he laid a hand on his cousin's shoulder, — "I'm a good deal older than you are, and you can take my word for it. Don't get sour on things. Of course people will do you if they can; but it's human nature, and you can't change it by growling about it. You are doing well, and what you need now is to keep your eyes open and your mouth shut. Why should you want to hurry things along?"

A flush came over Dick's face. "There's a reason all right enough. You see, Henry, there's a little girl not so very many miles from here — "

"Oho!" thought Henry, "a little girl!" But his face was immobile, excepting a momentary curious expression that passed over it.

"Now don't get to thinking it's all fixed up, because it isn't — not yet. But you see, I've been thinking that when I've got a little something to offer — "

"There's another thing you can take my word for, my boy," said Henry, with a dry smile; "don't get impetuous. Marrying may be all right, but it wants to be done careful."

Captain Stenzenberger's lumber yard was a few miles away, at the Chicago city limits. As the two sailors left the pier to walk up to the railway station, Dick was glad to change the subject for the first one that came into his head. "What do you suppose the *Foote* has been doing here this week, Dick? I heard she put in Tuesday or Wednesday."

"Looking for Whiskey Jim, I suppose."

"Oh, are they on that track again?"

"Haven't you seen the papers?"

"No — not for more than a week."

"Well, it's quite a yarn. From what has been said, I rather guess it's the liquor dealers that are stirring it up this time. There is a story around that he has been counterfeiting the red-seal label on their bottles. I think they're all off the track, though. Anybody could tell 'em that there's no such man. Every time a case of smuggling comes up, the papers talk about 'Whiskey Jim,' no

matter if it's up at the straits or down on the St. Lawrence."

"But what's the trouble now?"

"Oh, they're saying that this fellow is a rich man that has a big smuggling system with agents all around the Lakes and dealers in the cities that are in his pay,—sort of a smuggling trust."

"Sounds like a fairy story."

"That's about what it is. The regular dealers have taken up the fight to protect their trade, and one or two of the papers in particular have put reporters on the case, and all that sort of thing. And as usual they're announcing just what they've done and what they're going to do. The old *Foote* is to make a tour of the Lakes, and look into every port. And if there is any Whiskey Jim, I'll bet he's somewhere over in Canada by this time, reading the papers and laughing at 'em."

Captain Stenzenberger was seated in his swivel chair in his dingy little one-story office at the corner of the lumber yard. His broad frame was overloaded with flesh. His paunch seemed almost to rest on his thighs as he sat there, chewing an unlighted cigar in the corner

of his mouth, — a corner that had been moulded around the cigar by long habit and that looked incomplete when the cigar was not there. His fat neck — the fatter for a large goitre — was wider than his cheeks, and these again were wider than his forehead, so that his head seemed to taper off from his shoulders. A cropped mustache, a tanned, wrinkled face and forehead, and bright brown eyes completed the picture. When his two captains came in, he rested his pudgy hands on the arms of his chair, readjusted his lips around the cigar, and nodded. "How are you, boys?" said he, in a husky voice. "Have a good trip?" This last remark was addressed to Dick.

"First part was bad, but it cleared up later."

"Did you put right out into that storm from Manistee?"

"Yes — you see I had the wind behind me all the way down. Got to get a new small boat, though."

The "Captain" did not press the subject. In return for the privilege of buying the schooner by instalments he permitted Dick to pay for the insurance, so the young man could be as reckless as he liked.

Dick now explained that he had come to make a payment, and the transaction was accomplished.

"Step over and have a drink, boys," was the next formality; and the two stood aside while Stenzenberger got his unwieldy body out of the chair, put on his hat, and led the way out.

Adjoining the lumber yard on the west was a small frame building, bearing the sign, "The Teamster's Friend." It had been set down here presumably to catch the trade of the market gardeners who rumbled through in the small hours of every morning. In the rear, backed up against a lumber pile, was a long shed where the teams could wait under cover while their drivers were carousing within. A second sign, painted on the end of this shed, announced that Murphy and McGlory were the proprietors of the "sample room and summer garden." The three men entered, and seated themselves at a table. There was no one behind the bar at the moment, but soon a woman glanced in through the rear doorway.

Stenzenberger smiled broadly on her, and

winked. "How d' do, Madge," he said. "Can't you give us a little something with a smile in it, — one o' your smiles maybe now?"

She was a tall woman, with a full figure and snapping eyes, — attractive, in spite of a crow's-foot wrinkle or so. She returned the smile, wearily, and said, "I'll call Joe, Mr. Stenzenberger."

"You needn't do that now, Madge. Draw it with those pretty hands of yours, there's a dear."

So she came in behind the bar, wiping her hands on her apron, and quietly awaited their orders.

"What'll it be, boys?"

Dick suggested a glass of beer, but Henry smiled and shook his head. "You might make it ginger ale for me."

"I don't know what to do with that cousin of yours," said Stenzenberger to Dick. "He's a queer one. I don't like to trust a man that's got no vices. What *are* your vices, anyhow, Smiley?"

Henry smiled again. "Ask Dick, there. He ought to know all about me."

Stenzenberger looked from one to the other; then he raised his foaming glass, and with a "Prosit" and a stiff German nod, he put it down at a gulp.

"Been reading about the revenue case?" Henry asked of his superior.

"I saw something this morning."

"I've been quite interested in it. Billy Boynton told me yesterday that they had searched his schooner. It's a wonder they haven't got after us if they're holding up fellows like him. Do you think they'll ever get this Whiskey Jim, Cap'n?"

"No, they talk too much. And they couldn't catch a mud-scow with that old side-wheeler of theirs."

"Guess that's right. The *Foote* must have started in here before the *Michigan*, and she's thirty years old if she's a day. The boys are all talking about it down at the city. I dropped around at the Hydrographic Office after I saw Billy, and found two or three others that had been hauled over. It seems they've stumbled on a pipe-line half built under the Detroit River near Wyandotte, and there's been a good deal of excitement. There's capital behind it,

you see; and a little capital does wonders with those revenue men."

Stenzenberger was showing symptoms of readiness to return to his desk, but Henry, who rarely grew reminiscent, was now fairly launched.

"They can't get an effective revenue system, because they make it too easy for a man to get rich. It's like the tax commissioners and the aldermen and the legislators, — when you put a man where he can rake off his pile, month after month, without there being any way of checking him up, look out for his morals. And where they're all in it together, no one dares squeal. It's a good deal like the railway conductors.

"You remember last year when the North-eastern Road laid off all but two or three of its old conductors for stealing fares? Well, it wasn't a month afterward that one of the 'honest' ones came to me and hired the *Schmidt* to carry a twelve-hundred-dollar grand piano up to Milwaukee, where he lives. He had reasons of his own for not wanting to ship by rail. No, sir, it wouldn't be hard for me to have sympathy with an honest thief that goes

in and runs his chances of getting shot or knocked on the head, — that calls for some nerve, — but these fellows that put up a bluff as lawmakers and policemen and revenue officers and then steal right and left — deliver me!"

"Well, boys, I guess I'll have to step back. I'm a busy man, you know. Have another before we go?"

"One minute, Cap'n," said Dick. "There's something I want to talk over with you, if you can spare the time."

Stenzenberger sat down again. Henry, whose outbreak against the evils of society had stirred up, apparently, some pet feeling of bitterness, now sat moodily looking at the table.

"It's about Roche, Cap'n," Dick went on. "I had to leave him at Manistee."

"Why?"

"He drinks too much for me — I couldn't depend on him a minute. He bummed around up there, and got himself too shaky to be any use to me."

Stenzenberger, with expressionless face, chewed his cigar. "What did you do for a mate?"

"Came down without one."

"Have you found a man yet?"

"No — haven't tried. I thought you might have some one you could suggest."

"I don't know. You'll want to be starting up to Spencer's place in a day or so." He chewed his cigar thoughtfully for a moment, then dropped his voice. "There's a man right here you might be able to use. Do you know McGlory?"

"No."

"You do, Henry?"

"Yes, he was my mate for a year."

"Well," said Dick, "any man that suited Henry for a year ought to suit me."

"You'll find him a good, reliable man," responded Henry, in an undertone. "He has a surly temper, but he knows all about a schooner."

"Well, — if he's anywhere around here now, we could fix it right up."

Stenzenberger looked around. The woman had slipped out. "Madge," he called; "Madge, my dear."

She entered as quietly as before.

"Come in, my dear. You know Cap'n Smiley, don't you?"

No, she didn't.

"That's a fact. He's never seen in sample rooms. He sets up to be better than the rest of us; but I say, look out for him. And here's his cousin, another Cap'n Smiley, the handsomest man on the Lakes." Dick blushed at this. "Sit down a minute with us."

She shook her head, and waited for him to come to the point.

"Where's that man of yours, my dear? Is he anywhere around?"

"What is it you want of him?"

"I want him to know our young man here. I think they're going to like each other. You tell him we want to see him."

She hesitated; then with a suspicious glance around the group left the room.

In a moment McGlory appeared, a short, heavy-set man with high cheek-bones, a low, sloping forehead, and a curling black mustache. He nodded to Stenzenberger and Henry, and glanced at Dick.

"Joe," said the lumber merchant, "shake hands with Cap'n Dick Smiley. He's the

best sailor between here and Buffalo, and the only trouble with him is we can't get a mate good enough for him. A man's got to know his business to sail with Dick Smiley. Ain't that so, Henry?"

"I guess that's right."

"And Henry tells me you're the man that can do it."

This pleasantry had no visible effect on McGlory. He was looking Dick over.

"I don't know about that, Cap'n. I promised Madge I'd give up the Lake for good."

"The Cap'n here," pursued Stenzenberger, "is going to start to-morrow or next day for Spencer, to take on a load of timber and shingles." His small brown eyes were fixed intently on the saloon keeper as he talked. "And I think we'll have to keep him running up there for a good part of the summer. Queer character, that Spencer," he added, addressing Dick. "He has lived all his life up there in the pines. They say he was a squatter — never paid a cent for his land. But he has been there so many years now, I guess any one would have trouble getting

him out. He has got an idea that his timber's better than anybody else's. He cuts it all with an old-fashioned vertical saw, and stamps his mark on every piece."

"Why should it be any better?"

"I don't know that it is, though he selects it carefully. The main thing is, he sells it dirt cheap, — has to, you know, to stand any show against the big companies. He's so far out of the way, no boats would take the trouble to run around there if he didn't. Well, McGlory, we've got a good thing to offer you. You can drop in here once a week or so, you know, to see how things are running. Come over to the office with us and we'll settle the terms." Stenzenberger was rising as he spoke.

"Well, I don't know. I couldn't come over for a few minutes, Cap'n."

"How soon could you?"

"About a quarter of an hour."

"All right, we'll be looking for you. Here, give me half a dozen ten cent straights while I'm here."

McGlory walked to the door with them, and stood for a moment looking after them.

When he turned and pushed back through the swinging inner doors, he found Madge standing by the bar awaiting him, one hand held behind her, the other clenched at her side, her eyes shooting fire.

He paused, and looked at her without speaking.

"So you are going back to the Lake?" she said, everything about her blazing with anger except her voice — that was still quiet.

He was silent.

"Well, why don't you answer me?"

"What's all this fuss about, Madge? I haven't gone yet."

"Don't try to put me off. Have you told them you would go back?"

"I haven't told 'em a thing. I'm going around in a minute to see the Cap'n, and we'll talk it over then."

"And you have forgotten what you promised me?"

"No, I ain't forgot nothing. Look here, there ain't no use o' getting stagy about this. I ain't told him I'll do it. I don't believe I will do it."

"Why should you want to, Joe? Aren't

you happy here? Aren't you making more money than you ever did on the Lake?"

"Why, of course."

"Then why not stay here?"

"There's only this about it," he replied, leaning against the bar, and speaking in an off-hand manner; "Stenzenberger offers me the chance to do both. I could be in here every few days — see you most as much as I do now in a busy season — and make the extra pay clear."

"Oh, that's why you have been thinking you might do it?"

"Well, that's the only thing about it that — " He was wondering what was in her other hand. "You see, I can't afford to get the Cap'n down on me."

"You can't? I should think *he* would be the one that couldn't afford — "

"Now see here, Madge." He stepped up to her, and would have slipped his arm around her waist, but she eluded him. "I guess I'll go over and see what he has to offer, and then I'll come back, and you and me can talk it all over and see if we think — "

"If *we* think!" she burst out. "Do you

take me for a fool, Joe McGlory? Do you think for a minute I don't know why you want to go — and why you mean to go? Look at that!" She produced a photograph of a pretty, foolish young woman, and read aloud the inscription on the back, "To Joe, from Estelle."

An ugly look came into his eye. "I wouldn't get excited about that kiddishness if I was you."

"So you call it kiddishness, do you, and at your age?"

"Well, so long now, Madge. I'll be back in a few minutes."

"Joe — wait — don't go off like that. Tell me that don't mean anything! Tell me you aren't ever going to see her again!"

"Sure, there's nothing in it."

"And you won't see her?"

"Why, of course I won't see her. She ain't within five hundred miles of here. I don't know where she is."

"You'll promise me that?"

"You don't need to holler, Madge. I can hear you. Somebody's likely to be coming in any minute, and what are they going to

think?" He passed out into the back room, and she followed him.

"How soon will you be back, Joe?" She saw that he was putting on his heavy jacket — heavier than was needed to step over to the lumber office.

"Just a minute — that's all."

"And you won't promise them anything?"

"Why, sure I won't. I wouldn't agree to anything before you'd had a look at it."

He watched her furtively; and she stood motionless, trembling a little, ready at the slightest signal to spring into his arms. But he reached for his hat and went out.

She stood there, still motionless, until his step sounded on the front walk; then she ran upstairs and knelt by the window that overlooked the yards. She saw him enter the office. A few moments, and the two men who had been with Stenzenberger came out and walked away. A half-hour, and still Joe was in there with the lumber merchant. An hour — and then finally he appeared, glanced back at the saloon, and walked hurriedly around the corner out of sight. And she knew that he had slipped away from her. The photograph

was still in her hand, and now she looked at it again, scornfully, bitterly.

A man entered the saloon below, and she did not hear him until he fell to whistling a music-hall tune. At something familiar in the sound a peculiar expression came over her face, and she threw the picture on the floor and hurried down. When she entered the sample room, her eyes were reckless.

The man was young, with the air of the commercial traveller of the better sort. He was seated at one of the tables, smoking a cigarette. His name was William Beveridge, but he passed here by the name of Bedloe.

"Hello, Madge," he said; "what's the matter — all alone here?"

"Yes; Mr. Murphy's down town."

"And McGlory — where's he?"

"He's out too."

He looked at her admiringly. Indeed, she was younger and prettier, for the odd expression of her eyes.

"Well, I'm in luck."

"Why?" she asked, coming slowly to the opposite side of the table and leaning on the back of a chair.

But in gazing at her he neglected to reply. "By Jove, Madge," he broke out, "do you know you're a beauty?"

She flushed and shook her head. Then she slipped down into the chair, and rested her elbows on the table.

"You're the hardest person to forget I ever knew."

"I guess you have tried hard enough."

"No — I couldn't get round lately — I've been too busy. Anyhow, what was the use? If I had thought I stood any show of seeing you, I would have come or broken something. But there was always Murphy or McGlory around." He could not tell her his real object in coming, nor in avoiding the two proprietors, who had watched him with suspicion from the first. "Do you know, this is the first real chance you've ever given me to talk to you?"

"How did I know you wanted to?"

"Oh, come, Madge, you know better than that. How could anybody help wanting to? But" — he looked around — "are we all right here? Are we likely to be disturbed?"

"Why, no, not unless a customer comes in."

"Isn't there another room out back there where we can have a good talk?"

She shook her head slowly, with her eyes fixed on his face. And he, of course, misread the flush on her cheek, the dash of excitement in her eyes. And her low reply, too, "We'd better stay here," was almost a caress. He leaned eagerly over the table, and said in a voice as low as hers: "When are you going to let me see you? There's no use in my trying to stay away — I couldn't ever do it. I'm sure to keep on coming until you treat me right — or send me away. And I don't believe that would stop me."

"Aren't you a little of an Irishman, Mr. Bedloe?"

"Why?"

She smiled, with all a woman's pleasure in conquest. "Why haven't you told me any of these things before?"

"How could I? Now, Madge, any minute somebody's likely to come in. I want you to tell me — can you ever get away evenings?"

"Of course I can, if I want to."

"To-morrow?"

"Why?"

"There's going to be a dance in the pavilion at St. Paul's Park. Do you ride a wheel?"

She nodded.

"It's a first-rate ride over there. There's a moon now, and the roads are fine. Have you ever been there?"

"No."

"It's out on the north branch — only about a four-mile run from here. We can start out, say, at five o'clock, and take along something to eat. Then, if we don't feel like dancing, we can take a boat and row up the river."

She rested her chin on her hands, and looked at him with a half smile. "Do you really mean all this, Mr. Bedloe?"

For reply, he reached over and took both her hands. "Will you go?"

"Don't do that, please. Do you know how old I am?"

"I don't care. What do you say?"

"Please don't. I hear some one."

"No, it's a wagon. I want you to say yes."

"You — you know what it would mean if — if —"

"If McGlory — Yes, I know. You're not afraid?"

Her face hardened for an instant at this, and then, as suddenly, softened. "No," she said; "I'm not afraid of anything."

"And you'll go?"

She nodded.

"Shall I come here?"

"No, you'd better not."

"Where shall we meet?"

"Oh — let me see — over just beyond the station. It's quiet there."

"All right. And I'll get a lunch put up."

"No — it's easier for me to do that. I'll bring something. And now go — please."

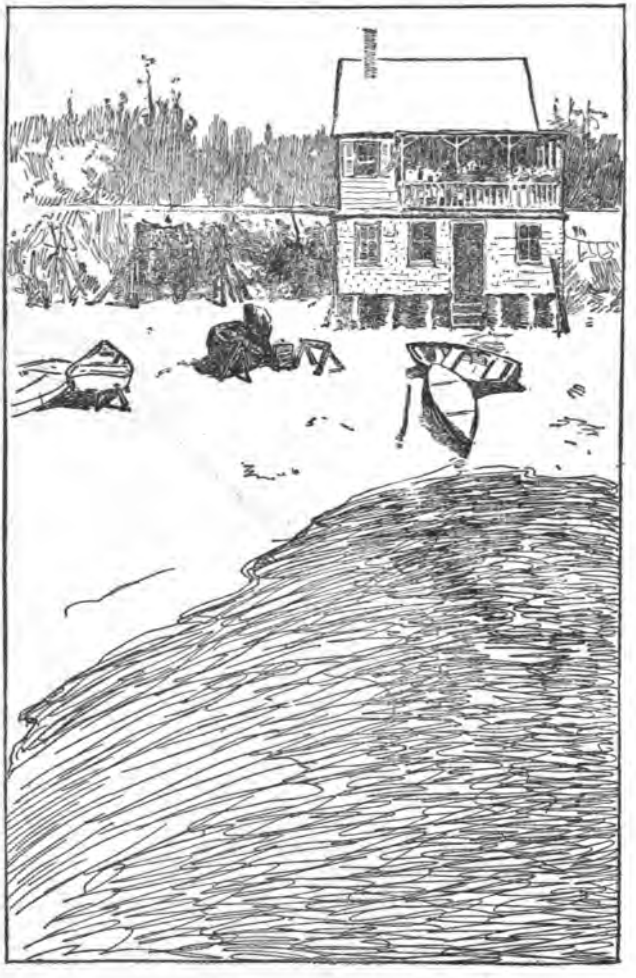
He rose, and slipped around the table toward her.

"Don't — you *must* go."

And so he went, leaving her to gaze after him with a high color.

CHAPTER III

AT THE HOUSE ON STILTS



CHAPTER III

AT THE HOUSE ON STILTS

DICK and Henry did not go directly back, and it was mid-afternoon when they reached the pier. As they walked down the incline from the road, Dick's eyes strayed toward the house on stilts. The *Captain* lay with nose in the sand, and beside her, evidently just back from a sail, stood Annie with two of the students who came on bright days to rent Captain Fargo's boats. They were having a jolly time, — he could hear Annie laughing at some sally from the taller student, — and they had no eye for the two sailors on the pier. Once, as they walked out, Dick's hand went up to his hat; but he was mistaken, she had not seen him. And so he watched her until the lumber piles, on the broad outer end of the pier, shut off the view; and Henry watched him.

Dick hardly heard what his cousin said when they parted. He leaped down to the deck of the *Merry Anne*, and plunged moodily into the box of an after cabin. His men, excepting Pink Harper, who was somewhere up forward devouring a novel, were on shore; so that there was no one to observe him standing there by the little window gazing shoreward. Finally, after much chatting and lingering, the two students sauntered away. Annie turned back to make her boat fast; and Dick, in no cheerful frame of mind, came hurrying shoreward.

She saw him leap down from pier to sand, and gave him a wave of the hand; then, seeing that he was heading toward her, she turned and awaited him.

"Come, Dick, I want you to pull the *Captain* higher up."

Dick did as he was bid, without a word. And then, with a look and tone that told her plainly what was to come next, he asked, "What are you going to do now?"

"I guess I'll have to see if mother wants me. I've been sailing ever since dinner."

"You haven't any time for me, then?"

"Why, of course I have, — lots of it. But I can't see you all the while."

"No, I suppose you can't — not if you go sailing with those boys."

Annie's mischievous nature leaped at the chance this speech gave her. "They aren't boys, Dick; Mr. Beveridge is older than most of the students. He told me all about himself the other day."

"Oh, he did."

"Yes. He was brought up on a farm, and he has had to work his way through school. When he first came here, he got off the train with only just three dollars and a half in his pocket, and he didn't have any idea where he was going to get his next dollar. I think it's pretty brave of a man to work as hard as that for an education."

Dick could say nothing. Most of *his* education had come in through his pores.

"I like Mr. Wilson, too."

"He is the other one, I suppose?"

Dick, his eyes fixed on the sand, did not catch the mirthful glance that was shot at him after these words. And her voice, friendly and unconscious, told him nothing.

"Yes, he is Mr. Beveridge's friend. They room together."

"Well, I hope they enjoy it."

"Now, Dick, what makes you so cross? When you are such a bear, it wouldn't be any wonder if I didn't want to see you."

He gazed for a minute at the rippling blue lake, then broke out: "Can you blame me for being cross? Is it my fault?"

She looked at him with wondering eyes.

"Why — you don't mean it is *my* fault, Dick?"

"Do you think it is just right to treat me this way, Annie?"

"What way do you mean, Dick?"

He bit his lip, then looked straight into her eyes and came out with characteristic directness: —

"I don't like to think I've been making a mistake all this while, Annie. Maybe I have never asked you right out if you would marry me. I'm not a college fellow, and it isn't always easy for me to say things, but I thought you knew what I meant. And I thought that you didn't mind my meaning it."

She was beginning to look serious and troubled.

"But if there is any doubt about it, I say it right now. Will you marry me? It is what I have been working for — what I have been buying the schooner for — and if I had thought for a minute that you weren't going to say yes sooner or later, I should have gone plumb to the devil before this. It isn't a laughing matter. It has been the thought of you that has kept me straight, and — and — can't you see how it is, Annie? Haven't you anything to say to me?"

She looked at him. He was so big and brown; his eyes were so clear and blue.

"Don't let's talk about it now. You're so — impatient."

"Do you really think I've been impatient?"

She could not answer this.

"Now listen, Annie: I'm going to sail in the morning, away around to a place called Spencer, on Lake Huron; and I could hardly get back inside of ten or twelve days. And if I should go away without a word from you — well, I couldn't, that's all."

"You don't mean — you don't want me to say before to-morrow?"

"Yes, that's just what I mean. You haven't anything to do to-night, have you?"

She shook her head without looking at him.

"Well, I'll be around after supper, and we'll take a walk, and you can tell me."

But her courage was coming back. "No, Dick, I can't."

"But, Annie, you don't mean — "

"Yes, I do. Why can't you stop bothering me, and just wait. Maybe then — some day — "

"It's no use — I can't. If you won't tell me to-night, surely ten — or, say, eleven — days ought to be enough. If I went off to-morrow without even being able to look forward to it — Oh, Annie, you've got to tell me, that's all. Let me see you to-night, and I'll try not to bother you. I'll get back in eleven days, if I have to put the schooner on my back and carry her clean across the Southern Peninsula," — she was smiling now; she liked his extravagant moods, — "and then you'll tell me." He had her hand; he was gazing so eagerly, so breathlessly, that

she could hardly resist. "You'll tell me then, Annie, and you'll make me the luckiest fellow that ever sailed out of *this* town. Eleven days from to-night — and I'll come — and I'll ask you if it is to be yes or no — and you'll tell me for keeps. You can promise me that much, can't you?"

And Annie, holding out as long as she could, finally, with the slightest possible inclination of her head, promised.

"Where will you be this evening?" he asked, as they parted.

"I'll wait on the porch — about eight."

For the rest of the afternoon Dick sat brooding in his cabin. When, a little after six, he saw Henry coming down the companionway, his heart warmed.

"Thought I'd come over and eat with you," said his cousin. "What's the matter here — why don't you light up?"

Dick, by way of reply, mumbled a few words and struck a light. Henry looked at him curiously.

"What is it, Dick?" he asked again.

There had been few secrets between them. So far as either knew, they were the last two

members of their family, and their intimacy, though never expressed in words, had a deep foundation. Before the present arrangement of Dick's work, which made it possible for them to meet at least once in the month, they had seen little of each other; but at every small crisis in the course of his struggle upward to the command of a schooner, Dick had been guided by the counsel and example of the older man. Now he spoke out his mind without hesitation.

"Sit down, Henry. When — when I told you about what I have been thinking — about Annie — why did you look at me as you did?"

"How did I look?"

"Don't dodge, Henry. The idea struck you wrong. I could see that, and I want to know why."

"Well," Henry hesitated, "I don't know that I should put it just that way. I confess I was surprised."

"Haven't you seen it coming?"

"I rather guess the trouble with me was that I have been planning out your future without taking your feelings into account."

"How do you mean, — planning my future?"

"Oh, it isn't so definite that I could answer that question offhand. I thought I saw a future for myself, and I thought we might go it together. But I was counting on just you and me, without any other interests or impediments."

"But if I should marry —"

"If you marry, your work will have to take a new direction. Your interests will change completely. And before many years, you will begin to think of quitting the Lake. It isn't the life for a family man. But then — that's the way things go. I have no right to advise against it." Henry smiled, with an odd, half bitter expression. "And from what I have seen since my eyes were opened, I don't believe it would do any good for me to object."

"You are mistaken there, Henry," the younger man replied quietly; "it isn't going well at all. I've been pretty blue to-day."

"Well," said Henry, with the same odd expression, "I don't know but what I'm sorry for that. That future I was speaking of seems to have faded out lately, — in fact, my plans are not going well, either. And so you probably couldn't count on me very much anyway."

He paused. Pink Harper, who acted as cook occasionally when the *Anne* was tied up and the rest of the crew were ashore, could be heard bustling about on deck. After a moment Henry rose, and, with an impulsive gesture, laid his hand on Dick's shoulder. "Cheer up, Dick," he said. "Don't take it too hard. Try to keep hold of yourself. And look here, my boy, we've always stepped pretty well together, and we mustn't let any new thing come in between us—"

"Supper's ready!" Pink called down the companionway.

Dick was both puzzled and touched; touched by Henry's moment of frankness, puzzled by the reasons given for his opposition to the suggested marriage. It was not like his cousin to express positive opinions, least of all with inadequate reasons. Dick had no notion of leaving the Lake; he could never do so without leaving most of himself behind. Plainly Henry did not want him married, and Dick wondered why.

It was half-past seven, and night was settling over the Lake. Already the pier end

was fading, the masts of the two schooners were losing their distinctness against the sky; the ripples had quieted with the dying day-breeze, and now murmured on the sand. The early evening stars were peeping out, looking for their mates in the water below.

On the steps, sober now, and inclined to dreaming as she looked out into the mystery of things, sat Annie. A shadow fell across the beach, — the outline of a broad pair of shoulders, — and she held her breath. The shadow lengthened; the man appeared around the corner of the house. Then, as he came rapidly nearer, she was relieved to see that it was Beveridge.

He was in a cheerful frame of mind as he stepped up and sat beside her. It was pleasant that the peculiar nature of his work should make it advisable to cultivate the acquaintance of an attractive young woman — such a very attractive young woman that he was beginning to think, now and then, of taking her away with him when his work here should be done.

"What do you say to a row on the Lake?" he suggested, after a little.

"I mustn't go away," said Annie. "I promised I would be here at eight."

"But it's not eight yet," Beveridge replied. "Let's walk a little way — you can keep the house in sight, and see when he comes."

"Well," doubtfully, "not far."

They strolled along the beach until Annie turned. "This is far enough."

"I don't know whether I can let your Captain come around quite so often," said he, as they sat down on the dry sand, in the shelter of a clump of willows. "It won't do — he is too good looking. I should like to know what is to become of the rest of us."

This amused Annie. They had both been gazing out towards the schooners, and he had read her thoughts. He went on: "You know it's not really fair. These sailor fellows always get the best of us. He named his schooner after you, didn't he?"

"Oh, no, I don't believe so."

"Sailors and soldiers — it's the same the world over! There's no chance for us common fellows when they are about. Tell you what I shall have to do — join the militia and come around in full uniform. Then

maybe you would be looking at me, too. I don't know but what I could even make you forget him."

She had to laugh at this. "Maybe you could."

"I suppose it wouldn't do me any good to try without the uniform, would it?"

She tossed her head now. "So that's what you think of me — that I care for nothing but clothes?"

"Oh, no, it's not the clothes. His red shirt would never do it. But it's the idea of a sailor's life — there is a sort of glitter about it — he seems pluckier, somehow, than other men. It's the dash and the grand-stand play that fetches it. I suppose it wouldn't be a bit of use to tell you that you are too good for him."

She made no reply, and the conversation halted. Annie gazed pensively out across the water. He watched her, and as the moments slipped away his expression began to change; for he was still a young man, and the witchery of the night was working within him.

"Do you know, I'm pretty nearly mean enough to tell you some things about Dick

Smiley. I don't know but what I'm a little jealous of him."

She did not turn, or speak.

"I'm afraid it is so. I would hardly talk like this if I were not. I thought I was about girl-proof, — up to now, no one has been able to keep my mind off my work very long at a time, — but you have been playing the mischief with me, this last week or so. It's no use, Annie. I wouldn't give three cents for the man that could look at you and keep his head. And when I think of you throwing yourself away on Smiley, just because he's good-looking and a sailor — you mustn't do it, that's all. I have been watching you —"

"Oh, — you have?"

"Yes, and I think maybe I see some things about you that you don't see yourself. I wonder if you have thought where a man like Smiley would lead you?" She would have protested at this, but he swept on. "He can never be anything more than he is. He has no head for business, and even if he works hard, he can't hope to do more than own his schooner. You see, he's not prepared for anything better; he's side-tracked. And if you

were just a pretty girl and nothing more, — just about the size of these people around you, — I don't suppose I should say a word; I should know you would never be happy anywhere else. Why, Annie, do you suppose there's a girl anywhere else on the shore of Lake Michigan — on the whole five Lakes — living among fishermen and sailors, as you do, that could put on a dress the way you have put that one on, that could wear it the way you're wearing it now?

"Oh, I know the difference, and I don't like to stand by and let you throw yourself away. You see, Annie, I haven't known you very long, but it has been long enough to make it impossible to forget you. I haven't any more than made my start, but I'm sure I am headed right, and if I could tell you the chance there is ahead of me to do something big, maybe you would understand why I believe I'm going to be able to offer you the kind of life you ought to have — the kind you were made for. I don't want to climb up alone. I want some one with me — some one to help me make it. You may think this is sudden — and you would be right.

It *is* sudden. I have felt a little important about my work, I'm afraid, for I really have been doing well. But ever since you just looked at me with those eyes of yours, the whole business has gone upside down. Don't blame me for talking out this way. It's your fault for being what you are. I expect to finish up my work here pretty soon now, and then I'll have to go away, and there's no telling where I'll be."

Annie was puzzled.

"Oh, you finish so soon? It is only September now."

"I have to move on when the work is done, you know. I obey orders."

"But I thought you were a student, Mr. Beveridge?"

He hesitated; he had said too much. Chagrined, he rose, without a word, at her "Come, I must go back now," and returned with her to the house. And when they were approaching the steps, he was just angry enough with himself to blunder again.

"Wait, Annie. I see you don't understand me. But there is one thing you *can* understand. I want to go away knowing that you aren't going to encourage Smiley any longer.

You can promise me that much. I don't want to talk against him; but I can tell you he's not the man for you; he's not even the man you think he is. Some day I will explain it all. Promise me that you won't."

But she hurried on resolutely toward the house, and there was nothing to do but follow. "Will you take my word for it, Annie, — that you'll do best to let him alone?"

She shook her head and hurried along.

On the steps sat a gloomy figure — Dick, in his Sunday clothes, white shirt and collar, red necktie, and all. His elbows rested on his knees, his chin rested on his hands, and the darkness of the great black Lake was in his soul. He watched the approaching figures without raising his head; he saw Beveridge lift his hat and turn away toward the bank; he let Annie come forward alone without speaking to her.

She put one foot on the bottom step, and nodded up at him. "Here I am, Dick. Do you want to sit here or — or walk?"

He got up, and came slowly down to the sand.

"So this is the way you treat me, Annie?"

"I'm not late, am I, Dick? It can't be much after eight."

"So you go walking with him, when — when —"

"Now, Dick, don't be foolish. Mr. Beveridge came around early, and wanted me to walk, and — and I told him I couldn't stay away —"

She was not quite her usual sprightly self; and the manner of this speech was not convincing. Dick's reply was a subdued sound that indicated anything but satisfaction.

"I'm mad, Annie, — I know I'm mad — and I don't think you can blame me."

"I — I didn't ask you to come before eight, Dick."

"Oh, that was it, was it? I suppose you told him to come at seven."

"Now, Dick, — please —"

But he, not daring to trust his tongue, was angry and helpless before her. After a moment he turned away and stood looking out toward the lights of the schooner. Finally he said, in a strange voice, "I see I've been a fool — I thought you meant some of the things you've said — I ought to have known better;

I ought to have known you were just fooling with me — you were just a flirt."

He did not look around. Even if he had, the night would have concealed the color in her cheeks. But he heard her say, "I think perhaps — you had better go, Dick."

He hesitated, then turned.

"Good night," she said, and ran up the steps.

"Say — wait, Annie — "

The door closed behind her, and Dick stood alone. He waited, thinking she might come back, but the house was silent. He stepped back and looked up at her little balcony with its fringe of flowers, but it was deserted; no light appeared in the window. At last he turned away, and tramped out to the *Merry Anne*. The men were aboard, ready for an early start in the morning; the new mate was settling himself in the cabin. To Dick, as he stood on the pier and looked down on the trim little schooner, nothing appeared worth while. He leaped down to the deck, and thought savagely that he would have made the the same leap if the deck had not been there, if there had been fourteen feet of green water

and a berth on the scalloped sand below. But there was one good thing — nothing could rob Dick of his sleep. And in his dreams Annie was always kind.

CHAPTER IV

THE CIRCLE MARK

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EARLY in the morning they were off. Dick, glum and reckless, took the wheel; McGlory went up forward and looked after hoisting the jibs and foresail. The new mate had already succeeded, by an ugly way he had, in antagonizing most of the men; but their spirits ran high, in spite of him, as the *Merry Anne* slipped away from the pier and headed out into the glory of the sunrise.

"Hey, Peenk," called Larsen, "geeve us 'Beelly Brown.'" And Pink, who needed no urging, roared out promptly the following ballad, with the whole crew shouting the spoken words: —

Oh, Billy Brown he loved a girl,
And her name was Mary Rowe, O-ho!
She lived way down
In that wick-ed town,

The town called She-caw-go.
(Spoken) WHERE'S THAT?
The place where the Clark streets grow.

"Oh, Mary, will you bunk with me?"
"Say, ain't you a little slow, O-ho!
'Bout sailin' down
To this wicked town
To tell me you love me so?"
(Spoken) GO 'LONG!
She's givin' 'im the wink, I know.

Oh, the wind blowed high, *an'* the wind blowed strong,
An' the Gross' Point' reef laid low, O-ho!
An' Billy Brown
Went down, down, down,
To the bottom of the place below.
(Spoken) WHERE'S MARY?
She's married to a man named Joe.

"You're makin' noise enough up there," growled McGlory. Pink, with a rebellious glance, bent over the rope he was coiling and held his peace.

As they started, so they sailed during four days — the Captain reckless, the mate hard and uncommunicative, the men cowed. And at mid-morning on the fourth day they arrived at Spencer.

The Hydrographic Office had at that time worked wonders in charting these Great

Lakes of ours, but it had given no notice to the little harbor that was tucked snugly away behind False Middle Island, not a hundred miles from Mackinaw City on the Lake Huron side; merely a speck of an island with a nameless dent behind it. But old Spencer, a lank, hatchet-faced Yankee, had found that a small schooner could be worked in if she headed due west, "with the double sand dune against the three pines till you get the forked stump ranged with the ruined shanty; meet this range and hold it till clear of the bar at the north end of the island; circle around to port; when clear of the bar, hug the inner shore of the island until the mill can be seen behind the trees; then run up into the harbor. Plenty of water here."

This discovery had resulted in such a curious little mill as can be found only in the back corners of the country, — a low shed with a flat roof; one side open to the day; within, an old-fashioned vertical saw; the whole supplied with power by a rotting, dripping, moss-covered sluiceway.

All about were blackened pine stumps —

nothing else for a hundred miles. And all through the forest was the sand, drifting like snow over roads and fences, changing the shape of the land in every high wind, blowing into hair and clothes, and adding, with the tall, endless, gray-green mullein stalks, the final touch of desolation to a hopeless land. Here and there, in the clearings, sand-colored farmers and their sand-colored wives struggled to wring a livelihood from the thankless earth. Other farmers had drifted helplessly away, leaving houses and barns to blacken and rot and sink beneath the sand drifts, and leaving, too, rows of graves under the stumps.

Twenty miles down the coast, where a railroad touched, was a feeble little settlement that was known, on the maps, as Ramsey City.

This region had been "cut over" once; it had been burned over more than once; and yet old Spencer, with his handful of employees and his deliberate little mill, wore a prosperous look on his inscrutable Yankee face. There was no inhabited house within ten miles, but he was apparently contented.

McGlory, it seemed, knew the channel; so Dick surrendered the wheel when they were nearing the island, and stood at his elbow, watching the landmarks. The mate volunteered no information, but Dick needed none; he made out the ranges with the eye of a born sailor. But even he was surprised when the *Merry Anne* swung around into the landlocked harbor and glided up to a rude wharf that was piled with lumber. Behind it was the mill; behind that, at some distance, a comfortable house, nearly surrounded by other smaller dwellings.

"So this is Spencer, eh?" observed Dick.

"This is Spencer," McGlory replied.

The owner himself was coming down to meet them, reading over a letter from his friend, Stenzenberger, as he walked. His wife came out of her kitchen and stood on her steps to see the schooner. Two or three men in woodman's flannels were lounging about the mill, and these sat up, renewed their quids from a common plug, and stared.

"How are you?" nodded Spencer, pocketing the letter. He caught the line and

threw it over a snubbing post. "This Mr. Smiley?"

"That's who," said Dick.

"How are you, Joe?" to McGlory.

"How are you, Mr. Spencer?"

In a moment they were fast, and Dick had leaped ashore. He caught Spencer's shrewd eyes taking him in, and laughed, "Well, I guess you'll know me next time."

"Guess I will." There was a puzzled, even disturbed expression on the lumberman's face. "I was thinking you didn't look much like your cousin. The stuff's all ready for you there. You'd better put one of your men on to check it up. Will you walk up and take a look around the place?"

"Thanks — guess I'll stay right here and hustle this stuff aboard. I'd like to put out again after dinner."

Spencer drew a plug from a trousers pocket, offered it to Dick, who at the sight of it shook his head, and helped himself to a mouthful. Then his eyes took in the schooner, her crew, and the sky above them. "Wind's getting easterly," he observed. "Looks like freshening up. Mean business getting out of here

against the wind — no room for beating. You'd better leave your mate to load and have a look at the place."

"Well, all right; McGlory, see to getting that stuff aboard right off, will you? We'll try to get out after dinner sometime."

When Spencer had shown his guest the mill and the houses of his men, he led the way to his own home and seated his guest in the living room. Here from a corner cupboard he produced a bottle and two glasses.

"I've got a little something to offer you here, Mr. Smiley," said he, "that I think you'll find drinkable. I usually keep some on hand in case anybody comes along. I don't take much myself, but it's sociable to have around."

Dick tossed off a glass and smacked his lips. "Well, say, that's the real stuff."

"Guess there ain't no doubt about that."

"Where do you get it from?"

"I bought that in Detroit last time I was down. Couldn't say what house it's from."

"Oh, you get out of here now and then, do you?"

"Not often — have another?"

"Thanks, don't care if I do."

545248

"You see I've got a little schooner of my own, the *Estelle*, — named her after my wife's sister, — and now and then I take a run down the shore to Saginaw or Port Huron, or somewhere."

"Do you get much lumber out?"

"Enough for a living."

"I noticed you had a mark on the end of every big stick — looked like a groove cut in a circle — most a foot across."

"Yes, that's my mark."

"The idea being that people will know your stuff, I suppose."

Spencer nodded shortly. "I'm getting out the best lumber on the Great Lakes — that's why I mark it — help yourself to that bottle — there, I'll just set it where you can reach it."

Dick would have stopped ordinarily at two glasses. To-day he stopped at nothing. "Much obliged. I haven't touched anything as strong as this for two years."

"Swore off?"

"Sort of, but I don't know that I've been any better off for it. There's nothing so good after sailing the best part of a week."

"You're right, there ain't. And that's the

pure article there — wouldn't hurt a babe in arms. Take another. You haven't been working for Cap'n Stenzenberger many years, have you?"

Throughout this conversation Spencer was studying Smiley's face.

"No, nothing like so long as Henry."

"How do you get along with him?"

"The Cap'n? Oh, all right. He's a little too smart for me, but I guess he's square enough."

"Doing a good business, is he?"

"Couldn't say. I don't know much about his business."

"Oh, you don't?" There was a shade of disappointment in the lumberman's voice as he said this, but Dick, who was reaching for the bottle, failed to observe it.

"McGlory been with you long?"

"No, this is his first trip."

"You don't say so! Wasn't he with your cousin a while back?"

"Yes, for a year."

"Thought I'd seen him on the *Schmidt*. Is he a good man?"

"Good enough."

"Let's see, wasn't he in with Stenzenberger once?"

"Couldn't say."

"Oh, you couldn't?"

"No. Say, I'll have to step down and see how things are going. Here, I'll just have another nip out o' that bottle."

"Nonsense, Cap'n; sit down, sit down. I guess McGlory's competent to get the load aboard all right. I ain't hardly begun to get acquainted with you yet. We'll have dinner pretty soon now, and when you've put a little something solid inside you, we'll go down and have a look at things. Don't get bashful about the bottle. There's plenty more where that come from."

"I don't know but what I've had all that's good for me."

"Pshaw! A man of your inches? Here now, here's to you!"

They drank together, and a little later they drank again.

When Mrs. Spencer, a tired, faded out little body, came to the door and said, "Dinner is ready, Ed," Dick's spirits were soaring amazingly, and his voice had risen to a pitch slightly

above the normal. Spencer nodded toward his guest and remarked, "This is Cap'n Smiley, Josie."

"Glad to make your acquaintance," exclaimed Dick, boisterously, striding forward to shake her hand.

"Show the Cap'n to the dining room, will you, Josie?" Spencer said. "I'll step out and call the boys."

Mrs. Spencer led the way through the short hall to the dining room, where a table was spread for Spencer's eight or ten men (McGlory and the crew were to eat on the *Merry Anne*). Dick, stepping high, followed her, and found himself being presented to a blond young woman with blue eyes and an agreeable expression. "My sister Estelle, Cap'n Smiley," said Mrs. Spencer.

"Glad to meet you," said Dick, looking so hard at her as they shook hands that she blushed and dropped her eyes.

Mrs. Spencer slipped out to the kitchen after the introduction, leaving them to await the men.

"You've never been here before?" she ventured.

"Never have. Do you live here?"

"Yes, I've been with sister four years now."

"Well, say, this is a pretty lonely place for a girl like you. I'll have to sail around often."

"I guess you will."

"Yes, *ma'am*, you're too pretty for this corner of the woods."

Estelle blushed and shook her head.

"But that's the gospel truth, sure as I'm Dick Smiley. And I can see you're too sensible to get mad at any one for telling the truth."

"Oh, Captain, I'm afraid you're a flirt," simpered Estelle.

"Me, flirt? Never. Not on your diamond ear-rings!"

"Sh! What would Ed think if he was to come in and hear you talking like that?"

Spencer, in truth, was already on the steps; in another moment he came into the room at the head of his men. And Dick, suddenly aware that his tongue was taking liberties with him, shut his lips tight and refused to speak another word throughout the meal. In vain the lumberman rallied him; in vain the men

made advances; in vain Estelle, who was waiting on table, threw him glances from behind Spencer's chair or let her hand brush his in passing him the potatoes; from a flushed, talkative man, Dick had turned abruptly into a silent, moody one, and he ate steadily, with eyes for nothing but his food.

The meal was nearly over when Spencer, looking around the table, said, "Hello, where's Pete?"

"He's busy," replied one of the men, "said he'd be a little late."

"Well, if he likes his vittles cold, I guess it's his own funeral."

"There he is now, outside there."

At this Spencer pushed back his chair and went to the window. "Hello, there, Pete," he called. "Ain't you coming to dinner?"

"Yes, be right along."

Dick stopped eating at the sound of the last voice, and listened, his fork in the air, for what was coming next. Hearing nothing further, he faced around and watched the door. A moment later in came Roche, trying to greet the men without looking at his former captain, and sliding into his chair with averted face.

"Mr. Roche, don't you know Cap'n Smiley?" said Spencer.

"Yes, yes, I know him. How are you, Cap'n?"

"How are you, Pete? How'd you get here?"

"Oh, I—" Roche was embarrassed. "I used to work for Mr. Spencer, and when I left you he took me back."

Dick merely grunted, and went on eating.

"Here, Estelle!" called Spencer. "Estelle, Cap'n Smiley'd like another piece o' pie. Ain't Estelle there, Josie?"

Mrs. Spencer appeared in the kitchen doorway. "No, she ain't here."

"Why, I just saw her a minute or so ago."

"She said it was hot in the kitchen and stepped outside. What is it you want?"

"Cap'n Smiley'd like some more pie."

"All right, I'll get it for him."

Dick bolted the second helping in the silence that had enveloped him since the meal began. Then he got up, said something about the schooner that nobody quite understood, and left the house.

Matters were going slowly at the wharf.

There was still a small pile of timber, and another of shingles waiting to be loaded. So far as Dick could see, Harper seemed to be directing the work.

"What are you doing there, Pink?" he demanded, in a tone that made Pink look curiously at him before replying.

"Loadin' up."

"Where's McGlory?"

"I don't know."

"You *don't know!* Well, why in —— don't you know?"

"I'll tell you, Cap'n."

"Oh, you'll tell me, will you?"

"Yes, I will. Mr. McGlory was awful partic'lar about the first load o' stuff that went aboard, handled most of it hisself, and made us work slow, an' then he just naturally quit workin' and walked off without sayin' a word, an' so I an' the boys have been tryin' to hustle it aboard, like you said, without him."

"Quit workin'! What right's he got to quit workin'?"

"I don't know, Cap'n.'

Two of the sailors, standing near by, had been watching their captain during this talk.

Now one of them turned away to hide a grin.

"What are you grinning about there?" roared Dick.

"I wasn't grinnin', Cap'n."

"Oh, you wasn't. Get to work, then, and shut your mouths. You're a lot o' loafers, that's what you are. Hustle, now!" He lent a strong hand himself, glad to vent in work the explosives that were working in his head; and as he worked he muttered, "So we quit workin' when we're tired, do we?"

Meanwhile the mate was strolling in the forest a few hundred yards away with Estelle. He was looking closely at her, as they walked, from under heavy eyebrows. She was flushing a very little and studying the sand at her feet.

"Who's been giving you that kind o' talk about me?" he was asking.

"Why — I don't know as it was anybody especial."

"You didn't believe it, did you?"

"N-no — but you see, you told me you were coming right back, and then you didn't — and I didn't know whether I was ever going to see you again or not. I thought — "

"Well, what was it you thought?"

"I thought you probably could have come if you'd wanted to!"

"You know better than that, Estelle. The only way I could come was on the schooner, and Cap'n Henry laid me off before the next trip. The minute I had a chance to come up here with this man, I grabbed it. What I'd like to know is, who is there up here that wants to tell lies about me? What else have you heard?"

"You — you won't be mad, Joe, if — if I tell?"

"Course not. Here, let's sit down."

They found a seat in the hollow of the sand, where the undergrowth screened them.

"You see, Joe, I heard that you — were married."

He started up. "That's a lie!"

"You said you — wouldn't get mad."

He dropped down again, muttering: "I ain't mad at you, Estelle, but don't you see there's some one that's just setting out to spread these lies. It's enough to rile a fellow. Who was it told you?"

"I don't know — it was quite a while back — maybe it was — Josie."

"But she don't know anything about me. Who could 'a' told her?"

"I don't know. You won't say anything to her, will you, Joe?"

"No, course not. It's funny, that's all. But so long's you don't believe it, I don't suppose I've got any cause for kicking."

"Of course I don't believe it — not now. Before you'd come back, and after all you'd said about — "

"About what, Estelle?"

"About coming up here for me — and our going away from here — "

"That's it," he broke in eagerly — "that's just it. I couldn't do it then because I didn't have the ready. But now, you see, I've got a little put by, and there ain't nothing to hinder our clearing out o' here for good."

"Isn't there, Joe?"

"Not a thing."

"Oh, I'm so glad. You don't know — you don't know how sick I get of this place, and these men around. I most die with it sometimes — feel as if I could go away alone if I knew of any place to go. Once I thought a little of — of just doing it anyhow, and maybe

finding you in Chicago. You've told me where your place is, you know, up on the north side."

"Yes, I know, but we can do it now."

"Now, Joe?"

"Sure."

"To-day?"

"Well — you see — I couldn't hardly do it to-day. I've got to finish my trip."

"Oh —"

"Now wait, Estelle. If I got impatient, I'd lose the trick, don't you see. This man, Dick Smiley, is working for the man that's got to help me. I know a way to make him back me — set me up in my own place in some new town maybe. I couldn't leave Smiley in the lurch without getting his boss down on me. I've got a hold on him, but he'd never stand for that. This Smiley's a no-good lot, but I've got to stick out this trip with him."

"But — then you'll be back in Chicago."

"I know. I'm coming up here by train. Or say I meet you at Saginaw."

"You thought you could do that before."

"I was broke then. Now I've got the stuff. And I know how I can turn a trick on this

trip back that'll be worth an easy five hundred to me. That'll take us clear down to Niagara Falls, maybe."

"Oh, could we go there, Joe?"

"Sure, anywhere you say."

"But, how'll I know when to start?"

"Well, let's see. I can't be sure of getting back to Chicago, and cleaning things up, and coming up to Saginaw inside of seven days. Call it eight; that'll make it — to-day's Tuesday — next week Wednesday. What day does Spencer drive down to Ramsey?"

"Thursdays."

"Then that's our day. You could get him to take you along, couldn't you?"

"Yes."

"Then you give him the slip and catch the afternoon train to Saginaw."

"But how could I take my things? He'd be sure to see them."

"Leave 'em behind. I'll buy you what you need. Have you got any money?"

"Not very much?"

He sat up and drew out a handful of bills. "Here — say I give you twenty-five. That'll see you through, won't it?"

"Oh, yes, Joe."

She was decidedly pretty now. Her weak face was alive with eagerness, her eyes were dancing. And McGlory, as he looked at her, seemed to feel something approaching a thrill.

There they sat, hearing nothing, seeing nothing, until the brush parted and Dick stood over them.

"Well, Mr. Man," said he, "I hope you're passing a pleasant afternoon with your friend."

Estelle got to her feet first.

"We thought maybe you'd spend a few minutes with us to-day," continued Dick. "You see we can't stay very long."

"Who're you talking to?" growled the mate.

"I'm a-looking right at you."

It was an awkward moment for McGlory. He felt that it was downright necessary to show his superiority, for it is only by such a show that women like Estelle are kept constant. On the other hand, even he understood the danger of openly defying his captain. But the seconds were flying.

"You go back to your schooner, Dick Smiley. You ain't boss here."

"Well, by —" Dick checked himself, with a half bow toward Estelle. "I beg your pardon, my dear. Your friend kind o' surprised me."

McGlory flashed a suspicious glance at her.

"None o' your jaw now, Smiley. You can do your talking when it's time to sail. You'll have to shut up here."

"Maybe you'll be good enough to tell me when you'll be ready to start," suggested Dick, with extravagant politeness.

McGlory rumbled an unintelligible reply; and Dick turned again to Estelle. "Will you excuse him, my dear. You see he's got a previous engagement with me. But you couldn't hardly blame him for forgetting, with such a lady friend to talk to."

"Look here," McGlory broke out; "you've said enough. You go back to your schooner where you belong!"

"Thanks, I'm going. We're all going. You'll come with us, my dear?"

Estelle, who was plunged in confusion, said nothing, but fell in with him. And McGlory, fuming, had to follow.

The east wind was freshening; the sky was

darker. Spencer, who stood awaiting them on the wharf, shook his head at Dick. "You aren't going to start now, are you, Cap'n?"

"Sure we are."

"It's mean business with an east wind. But still McGlory knows the channel."

"McGlory be ——!" said Dick, throwing off his ceremonial manner now that Estelle had escaped to the house. "I'd take her through hell for fifty cents. Just watch my smoke."

Spencer said nothing further. The mate was ordered up forward; the lines were cast off; Dick took the wheel. And out they went, with a reckless daring that made Spencer and Pink Harper smile from different motives.

"He's going to butt a hole clean through Middle Island," muttered the lumberman. But before the words were out, the *Merry Anne* swung cheerily about and went skimming along the channel bank. Soon she rounded the island in safety and disappeared.

Not until they were fairly out on Lake Huron did Dick call his mate. Then he gave up the wheel without a word and stumbled down into the cabin. His high spirits had given place to weariness and depression;

and, dropping down for a moment on his bunk, he fell asleep.

On deck McGlory, with an expression of smouldering anger, stood at the wheel, glancing now at the sails, now at the water, now at the receding shore. If his eyes could have penetrated the bluffs and the forest, he would not have been happier. For Estelle, who seemed to be the victim of her emotions today, was listening to some earnest talk from a boastful fellow named Roche.

CHAPTER V

BURNT COVE

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DURING the rest of the afternoon, during the evening, on into the night, Dick's hearty snoring floated up the companionway. At supper-time McGlory called Ole Larsen to the wheel, and went below. The Swede looked after him and observed that he took the steps slowly and cautiously, and was more quiet than usual in the cabin. From the mate his attention turned to the binnacle. His instructions were to hold the course, nor'east, pointing into the wind with the sheets hauled close. Ordinarily he would not have taken the trouble to question any orders that might have been given him, but the dislike and distrust all the crew felt for their new mate was stirring in his mind. He took occasion, when Harper came aft about some work, to beckon him and point to the compass.

"Aye tank we don' go at Mackinaw, no," he said in a half whisper.

"Is that the course he gave you?"

"Ya-as, dat's her."

"I was thinkin' myself it was funny. Near's I can figure, we're pointin' for Manitoulin Island. Now what in thunder — Look here, Ole — first chance I get I'm goin' to wake the Cap'n."

"Aye tank we do dat, ya-as."

They had dropped their voices, but McGlory had heard them. He now came tiptoeing up the companion steps, wearing an ugly scowl. "Go up forward," he commanded, addressing Harper.

"I was just askin' about the course, Mr. McGlory. It didn't quite seem to me — "

"Go up forward!"

Pink hesitated, then he raised his voice. "Cap'n Smiley generally likes me to wake him when he's slept as long's this."

"Go up forward."

"Well — "

He was starting, but he moved too slowly. McGlory's temper gave way, and he struck

him, with the back of his hand, across the face.

"You hit *me!*" The blood rushed into Harper's face; he drew himself up, his fists contracting, the muscles of his bare forearms knotting. Ole gazed impassively at the compass, but his fingers were twitching on the spokes of the wheel; he saw from the expression of Harper's eyes that the boy needed no assistance. For one tense moment, as they stood there on the sloping deck, a faint light shining on them from the open companionway, anything seemed possible. Had McGlory been a coward he would have retreated from the blazing figure before him; but he was not a coward. Instead of retreating, he stepped forward, gripped Harper's arm, and whirled him around. "Go up forward!" he said for the fourth time. And Pink, swallowing hard, went.

A gentle sigh escaped the wheelsman. The mate turned on him; but Ole was gazing out into the dark with an expressionless face. Into the silence that followed came a gurgling snore from the cabin; if Pink had hoped to wake the captain, he had failed. And the end of

this brief incident was that McGlory returned below and finished his supper, while the *Merry Anne* continued to point nor'east.

Towards eleven o'clock the moon rose and showed Duck Island six miles off the port bow. McGlory was again at the wheel. He now brought her up still closer to the wind, heading a few points off Outer Duck Island and skimming the lower edge of Jennie Graham Shoal. Huddled up in the bow, out of the mate's view, Harper and Larsen were watching out ahead, pulling at their pipes and occasionally exchanging a whispered word or two. Linding, the third sailor, lay flat on the deck by the windlass, his head pillowed on a coil of rope, the regular sound of his breathing telling that he was asleep. Soon Ole's practised eyes made out a bit of land far off to port, and he pointed it out to his companion.

"What is it?"

"Meedle Dook Island, ya-as."

A few minutes more and they saw a line of coast dead ahead.

"Manitoulin Island?" whispered Pink.

"Aye tank."

On they went until the shore lay plainly

before them in the moonlight,— on until the breeze began to fail them, so close were they in the shelter of the land. Finally they heard McGlory say in a guarded voice, "Ready about, up there!" and they sprang to their places.

It proved a short tack. Hardly a quarter of an hour later, when the land had faded but a little way into the indistinct night, they came about again. This time they ran in so directly for the land that Pink grew nervous. He stood up, pipe in hand, looking back at the mate, then forward at the shore. The breeze fell away, but they drifted on through a mirror of shapes and shadows. The trees of the bank loomed before them, then, it seemed, around them.

Still the *Merry Anne* drifted on, her wheelsman turning every stray breath to advantage. She was in a cove now, though how wide it was or how far it extended the sailors could not tell, so strangely were the bluffs and the trees reflected in the water. Drifting, however, is lazy work, and Harper sat down to it and relighted his pipe. At length the schooner came lazily up into the wind and McGlory

ordered the anchor overboard. Here was a chance to try to wake the Captain, and the chance was seized; but even the clank and rattle of the chain failed to interrupt the snoring in the cabin.

"Linding," said McGlory, "come back here."

Larsen and Harper looked at each other, — they had not told Linding, — then between them they woke him and sent him aft.

Without a word the mate motioned the sailor to help him lower the boat over the stern.

"He's goin' ashore," whispered Harper. Ole nodded. "He's beckonin' for us — say, Ole, shall we go?"

But the Swede started promptly aft. The habit of obedience is so strong in a well-disposed sailor that only great provocation will overthrow it. With but a moment's hesitation, Harper followed.

"Climb down there," said the mate; "and mind you're quiet about it."

Down they went; McGlory came after and took the rudder; and, propelled by two pairs of oars, the boat slipped away, crossed a patch

of moonlight, and entered the mysterious region of shadows.

"Way enough — easy now!"

They literally could not distinguish the shore — it was all distorted, unnatural. They dragged the oars in the water and looked over their shoulders. Linding was in the bow with a long boat-hook ready in his hands. Then they found themselves floating quietly alongside a narrow landing pier, and it was necessary to tumble in the oars in a hurry.

Linding checked the boat's headway, the others reached out and caught the planking with their hands; and McGlory stepped out.

"Make her fast," he said, "and come ashore."

They obeyed.

"Now, boys," — he seemed of a sudden to be making an attempt at good-nature, — "I want you to wait here for me. I'll be back in five minutes." And walking along a path that mounted the bluff, he left them standing there.

For a few moments they were silent. Then Harper spoke up: "Look here fellows, I don't know how it strikes you, but I'm hanged if I like this way o' doin' business. What we'd

better do is to pull right back an' wake the Cap'n."

"Meester McGlory, she haf geef us orders, ya-as?"

"What's that got to do with it?"

But the two Swedes shook their heads. They were slow of body and mind; the idea of rowing off without the mate was too daring.

"You won't do it, then?"

They looked at each other.

"All right," said Harper, pulling off his coat, "all right. Have it your way. But I'm goin' back, an' I'm goin' now." He tossed his coat into the boat, pulled off his boots and threw them after, let himself down into the water, waded a few steps, and struck out for the schooner. It was but a little way. He swam around to the stern, and drew himself up by the boat tackle, which had been left hanging down close to the water. Rushing down into the cabin, where a single lantern burned dimly, he bent over the Captain, who lay dressed in his bunk, and shook him.

"Wake up, Cap'n, wake up!"

"Lemme be, will you?"

"Wake up! It's me — Harper."

"I don't care if it is. You needn't drown me."

"But, Cap'n!"

"Well, what's the row?" Slowly Dick raised his head and looked around. "Good Lord! What time is it?"

"Twelve o'clock."

"Twelve o'clock *what!*"

"Midnight."

"Midnight your gran'ma!"

"But it is. Mr. McGlory, he—"

"Just let go o' me, will you? Go over there and drip on the steps." Dick was slowly swinging his feet around and sitting up. "You've soaked my bedding now. What's the matter with you anyhow? Been trying to swim home?"

"No, Cap'n, but Ole says we're up at—"

"See here, why haven't I been waked up?"

"Mr. McGlory wouldn't let me wake you."

"Wouldn't let you?"

"No, he—"

"What's the matter with your lip?"

"McGlory hit me."

"Hit you!" Dick sprang to his feet. "What in thunder are you talking about?"

"I'm tryin' to tell you, Cap'n, if you'll just listen —"

"Go on, be quick about it."

"You've been sleepin' ever since we left Middle Island. Ole an' me we seen that the course was nor'east instead o' nor'west, an' I was goin' to wake you, but he wouldn't let me, an' I hollered loud but it didn't wake you, an' now we're in a place Ole thinks is Burnt Cove on Manitoulin Island, an' — an' Mr. McGlory's made me row him ashore, an' told us to wait there for him, an' I swum back to wake you —"

Dick was standing close to Harper, staring at him with a mixture of astonishment and incredulity. Now he brushed him aside and ran up the steps. Sure enough, on every side were trees and the shadows of trees. The Lake was not to be seen. He turned again to Harper who was close at his elbow. "Where's the boat?"

"Right over there — not a hundred yards."

"Ole!" called Dick.

"Ya-as."

"Bring that boat back and hustle about it."

In a moment they heard the clanking of

oars, and soon the boat appeared in the moonlight and ran alongside.

"What are you doing there?" said Dick.

"Mees' McGlory, she say to wait."

"Oh, she does, does she! Well, we'll see about it." He leaped down to the boat and took the stern. "Pull ashore."

"Cap'n," said Harper, "will you let me go?"

"Sure, if you want to. Take Linding's place. Linding, you stay on the schooner. And mind, there's nobody but me giving orders around here. Pull away, boys."

The landing pier was deserted when they ran alongside. "Which way did he go?" asked Dick, as he stepped out.

Harper pointed at the dim path.

"How long ago was it?"

"Just a few minutes."

"All right. We'll wait here." He sat down with his back against a post, and filled his pipe. "Got a match, Pink? Oh, I forgot, you're wet. Ole, give me a match." He lighted up and settled back to smoke and think.

McGlory had evidently walked some little

distance back from the Cove, for nearly ten minutes passed before they heard his step in the brush. Dick sat still until he saw the mate coming down the bluff, then he said, "Get aboard, McGlory."

At the first word McGlory stopped short.

"Well," Dick added, rising, "how long are you going to keep us waiting?"

Still there was no word from the motionless figure. Not until Dick stepped to the stern of the boat did he speak. "Come up here a minute, will you, Cap'n? I want to speak to you."

"You can do any speaking you have to do on the schooner. Swing around, Pink. I'll hold her."

"Just a minute, Cap'n, you know what I mean."

"All I know about you is that you can't be trusted."

"Seems to me you're gettin' mighty innocent all to once."

"You can have your choice, McGlory, of getting aboard or staying behind. For my part, I'd a heap sight rather leave you behind."

"You needn't talk that way. I know what

I'm doin' — I know I'm not to talk to you — "

"All right, Pink," — Dick stepped into the boat, — "let her go."

McGlory turned and looked back up the path, as if listening. Then suddenly he ran out on the landing and got aboard just as the men were pushing off. He took the bow thwart, and settled down without a word. When they reached the schooner, he got out the boat-hook, and held her steady while Dick climbed out.

"That'll do there," said Dick, when McGlory and Larsen were hoisting the boat up to the davits. "Let her down again. Pink, you'd better take Linding and sound the channel ahead of us. We'll start right out."

"That ain't necessary," put in the mate, hurriedly; "I can take her out."

Dick turned and looked him over sharply. "How do I know you wouldn't run her aground? You seem to be raising the devil generally."

"I ain't a fool," replied the mate, with an impatient gesture.

"I'd feel a little safer if you were. Well,

all right, Pink, make her fast. We'll let him try it."

McGlory took the wheel, and Dick sat by him on the cabin trunk. They went out as they had come in, gaining a rod here and a yard there, as the vagrant night breezes stirred the trees and faintly rippled the water. Up forward the men settled down as quietly as if working out of Burnt Cove after midnight were a part of the daily routine. Dick smoked in silence. The mate alone was nervous. For some reason he seemed as anxious now to get out of the Cove as he had been to get into it. Occasionally his eyes wandered back toward the darker spot where the landing was. Once he seemed to hear something, — they were then in sight of the open lake, — and he swung her off quickly to gain headway. Finally Dick asked: —

"Got another o' your lady friends stowed away up here?"

The mate grunted.

"Maybe you thought you'd just drop around for a little call. That the idea?"

"No, that ain't the idea."

"I didn't know you were a Mormon."

Another grunt.

"Case o' temporary mental aberration, perhaps. You thought you owned the schooner. Or maybe you dreamed I was going to give it to you — not for its *in*trinsic value, but as a token of affection *and* esteem. That it?"

"No, that ain't it, an' you know it ain't."

"Oh, I'm in the secret, am I?"

McGlory leaned across the wheel and looked at him. "Are you a-tryin' to make me think you don't know why I come here?"

"I certainly am."

"Well, you beat me."

"Then we're in the same condition. It isn't exactly usual, you know, to take another man's schooner off for a summer cruise without asking him if he don't mind. Of course, between friends, it's all right — only there are some little formalities that are customary. But I suppose you aren't going to tell me anything about it — why you did it."

The mate said nothing. They were now slipping out into deep water, where the breeze could fill the sails, and the schooner began to heel and to nose through the ripples with a grateful sound. The light was stronger out

here, and the mate could see the Captain's face more plainly. What he saw there answered several questions that lay, unspoken, in his mind.

"I'll take the wheel now," said Dick. "Hold on, don't you go forward. Wait here till I get through with you." He raised his voice and called to the others. "Come back here, boys, all o' you." And when the crew was grouped about the wheel: "Pink, here, is going to be my mate for the rest o' this trip. I want you to take his orders the same as if they were mine. McGlory has nothing more to say on this schooner. That's all."

The men looked at each other. The Swedes were slow to grasp what was said. McGlory stood back in the shadow, and his face told nothing. Harper was excited.

"That's all, I tell you. You can go back."

They went at this — all but Pink, who lingered.

"Cap'n —"

"Well, what is it?"

"I was just goin' to say — it's more'n square — you've been more'n white to me —"

"Hold on there. You needn't bother about

engrossing any resolutions. You'll find it hard enough."

"Well — I'm mighty obliged for — "

"Not at all."

Thirty-six hours later, when the *Merry Anne* was slipping through the islands west of the straits and heading southward for the run down Lake Michigan, McGlory slipped aft and addressed Harper, who had the wheel. "I was sort o' hasty awhile ago, Pink, when I hit you that time. I hope you ain't a-layin' it up against me."

Pink stared at him, but offered no reply.

"I was a little excited. You see, Cap'n Smiley's a good sailor, but he don't know where his own interest is."

"I ain't got nothin' to say to you about Cap'n Smiley."

"I know. Say, you ain't got no objections to turnin' an honest penny, have you?

"That depends."

"Or say maybe it was a neat little five hundred — good hard stuff."

"Where's it comin' from?"

"You know where we was — over in Canada?"

"I ought to."

"Well, Smiley knows all about that."

"The —— he does!"

"Sure thing. He's been there before, more'n once."

"Funny he didn't know the channel then. There ain't a place around the Lakes he couldn't sail the *Anne* through if he'd smelled it once."

"I know. That's the queer part of it. He knows it with his eyes shut. He had some reason or other for puttin' up the bluff he did, an' I'd give just about ten round dollars to know what it was."

"Better ask him."

"Watch me. This ain't the kind o' thing you can talk out about. I know he knows, an' he knows I know; but he's down on me an' there's nothin' I can say — here, anyway."

"What do you want o' me?"

"You're the right sort — you've got nerve an' a head on you. Help me carry this business through, an' I'll divvy up with you — five hundred, sure, to start with."

"What am I to do?"

"Nothin' hard. You've got a good stand in with Smiley. Just put in a word for me, so's he won't fire me before another trip, anyway. You fellows made a mistake this time in not standin' by me. I can do better by you than he can — a lot better. Help me to stay aboard for the next trip, an' I'll hand you fifty right now for a sweetener."

"Well, I'll see what I can do."

"I've got the fifty down below. I'll get it."

"Hold on — don't be in a hurry. You'd better see what I can do for you before you do any sweetenin'."

McGlory nodded and slipped back to his station. When the watch was changed, he went below and settled down to writing a letter on crumpled paper with a pencil. He seemed to be thinking hard. Three times he made a start, only to hold the paper up to the lantern, shake his head over it, tear it up, and stuff the pieces into his pocket. But the fourth attempt, which follows, suited him better.

"DEAR ESTELLE: I ain't done the trick I was going to do this trip. The Captain

woke up too soon and stoped me. But I've got a fellow here on bord that's going to see me threw next trip so don't you go down to Saginaw yet. Wait til you see me at Spencer's and Ile tell you al about the scheme itll be worth a thousand cool anyway I should say its worth waiting for. I'm doing it for you you know so don't you get impatent but just wait a litle longer and we'll have a gay old time.

"JOE."

When he gave the wheel to Dick, Harper repeated to him the whole conversation and asked him what he made of it.

"Give it up."

"You don't think he's layin' for you, do you? I couldn't tell what he was up to. Of course he wouldn't hardly let me see into his game the first time we talked."

"Oh, no, — hardly."

"Will I go on lettin' him talk to me?"

"If you see any fun in it."

"It ain't that — I thought maybe we could find out what he's after."

"I don't want to know about it."

"But you don't think he'll try to — stick it into you anyway?"

"Let him try. He can't do much harm."

"Well —"

"Take my advice, Pink, and quit thinking about him. I don't like this business any more than you do, but the worse it is the less I want to know about it. When we get back we'll fire him, and that will end it."

"Don't you think we'd better tie him up, or somethin'?"

"That wouldn't do any good. You'd better tumble below and get some sleep. There's nothing like it when you're a little worked up."

Dick had indeed something else to think of than his rascal of a mate. Only four days of sailing, if the wind should hold, lay between the *Merry Anne* and the Annie for whom she had been named. These days would slip away before he knew it, and then? The uncertainty was hard, but still he dreaded the meeting — that might be harder still.

Off Waukegan on the last day the wind swung around to the south, nearly dead ahead; and as the schooner lost headway and was forced

into beating to windward, the dread suddenly gave place to impatience. So variable were his thoughts indeed, as the miles slipped astern and the long green bluff that ends in Grosse Pointe grew nearer and plainer, that his courage oozed away.

Far down the Lake, between the Lake View crib and the horizon, was a speck of a sail. Dick's heart sank — he knew as if he could make out the painted name that it was the *Captain.* He watched it hungrily as the *Merry Anne,* headed in close to the waterworks pier, swept easily around, and started on the last outward tack. Then he called to Pink, and had the sheets hauled close; and he laughed softly and nervously as the schooner responded with a list to port and a merry little fling of spray. He could at least come in with a rush, with all his colors flying.

He was waiting for the tiny sail to swing around and point northward. He was disappointed. He reached for the glass and took a long look — then lowered it, and smiled bitterly. There were two figures seated in the stern of the *Captain.*

The *Schmidt* was lying on the south side of

the pier; and the wind enabled Dick to come easily up on the opposite side and make fast. It was late in the afternoon, and Dick released the two Swedes, both of whom had families on shore. Then he crossed the pier, between the high piles of lumber, and found Henry sitting quietly, as usual, in his cabin.

To the older man's greeting Dick responded moodily. "I want to talk to you, Henry. What's my reputation, anyhow, among the boys? Do they call me mean, or a driver, or hard to get along with?"

Henry looked at him curiously, and shook his head. "I never heard anything of that sort. Your row with Roche was the only thing, and I guess he was a poor stick."

"Well, I'm through with McGlory, too."

"Through with him?" Henry was startled. "You haven't discharged him?"

"No, but I'm going to to-night. I've brought him back here, and he wants to stay, but I won't have him aboard another minute."

"What's the trouble?"

Dick gave him the whole story, including the conversation between McGlory and Harper up in the straits.

"I don't like the sound of it very well," said Henry, when he had finished. "Couldn't you get on with him a little longer?"

"After that?"

"I know — there is some deviltry behind it. But still he is a good man. You'll have hard work finding a better. And honest, I would kind of hate to face Cap'n Stenzenberger myself with this story."

"Why? I can't have a man around that's going to steal my schooner in my sleep."

"Oh, well, he could never do that again. I can't see what he was thinking of. Do you see into it at all?"

Dick had been staring at the cabin table. At this question he raised his eyes, for an instant, with an odd expression. "I know all I want to. The whole thing is so outrageous that I am not going to try to follow it up."

"He talked to your man about a rake-off, didn't he?"

Dick nodded.

"What do you suppose he was going to rake?"

Dick, whose eyes were lowered, and who

was therefore unconscious of the pallor of his cousin's face, said nothing.

"I know we don't look at some things quite the same, Dick," Henry went on. "But if anybody on *my* schooner is going to do any raking, he has got to see me first. A dollar's a dollar, my boy. When you are my age, you will think so too."

"I don't mix in this business."

"No more would I. But it seems to me, if McGlory's got some way of his own of making a little pile, and if you could have your share for just letting him stay aboard, you'd be sort of a fool not to do it."

"Excuse *me!*"

Henry smiled indulgently. "There's nothing very bad in what you have told me. Of course, if there are things you *haven't* told me, it might make a difference."

"You have the whole story."

"Do you know, Dick, you make me think of the folks up at the college here. You know that brewer that died repentant and left five hundred thousand dollars to the Biblical School? Well, a lot of the old preachers got stirred up over it and made them refuse the money —

made 'em refuse five hundred thousand cash! Good Lord! if these particular folks would look into the private history of all the dollars in the country, they'd never touch one of them, — not one. There isn't a dollar of the lot that hasn't got a bad spot somewhere, like the rest of us. The main thing is, are your own hands clean when you take it? If they are, the dollar can't hurt you."

"But look here, Henry, my mind's made up about this. I won't have that fellow on my schooner."

"Going to turn him off to-night?"

"Yes, right now."

"All right. You can send him over here. I'll give him a bunk till morning. But what are you going to do for a mate?"

"Pink is all right. I could go farther and do worse."

"All right. Tell Joe to bring his things along."

CHAPTER VI

THE RED SEAL LABEL

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THE RED SEAL LABEL

IT was on Friday morning that the *Merry Anne* had sailed away from Lakeville for her first trip to Spencer's. On this same Friday another set of persons were passing through a series of events which concern this story.

Dick had sailed out at daybreak. A few hours later, when the morning was still young, Roche, who had come down by train from Manistee, was hanging about near "The Teamster's Friend," now standing on the corner by the lumber office looking stealthily up and down the street, now passing by on the opposite sidewalk, closely watching the screened windows. Finally he crossed over and entered the saloon to ask for McGlory. Murphy, the senior partner in the business, who lived a few blocks away, came in for his day's work and

found Roche there. "McGlory," said Murphy, "won't be back for a week or so." At this, with an angry exclamation, Roche went out. The quantity of bad whiskey he had taken in since his discharge from the *Merry Anne* at the Manistee pier, had not worked to change his humor or to calm his faculties. He was plunging around the lumber office into a side street when Beveridge, who had been watching his every movement, accosted him.

"Beg pardon, have you got a match?"

"Hey? What's that?"

"Have you got a match?"

"A match? Why, sure."

"Much obliged. I've got the cigars. Better make a fair trade. You'll find 'em a good smoke."

"Well, don't care 'f I do. Here, you can't light in this wind."

"Oh, yes, I'm Irish. Say, haven't I seen you somewhere?"

"Couldn't say."

"Why, sure I have. Isn't your name Roche?"

"That's what it is."

"And you're mate of the *Merry Anne*, sailing out of Lakeville?"

"You're wrong there."

"No, I'm sure of it. I've seen you too many times."

"Why, do you b'long out there?"

"Yes, I live at Lakeville."

"Well, look here; I'll tell you how it is. I was on the *Merry Anne*, but I ain't any more."

"Oh, you quit Smiley?"

"You're right, I quit him. No more Smiley for me."

"What's the trouble?"

"What *ain't* the trouble, you'd better say. But I ain't tellin'. Smiley's done me dirt, an' I know 'im for just what he is, but I ain't tellin'."

They were passing another saloon, and Roche accepted an invitation to step in.

"I've seen Smiley a good deal around the piers," said the young fellow, when they were seated. "Likes to swagger some, doesn't he?"

"Oh, he's no good."

"Mean to work for? Those conceited fellows generally are."

"He's mean; yes. But that ain't the worst thing about him." Roche paused guardedly, and glanced around the empty room.

"I don't know much about him myself, just seen him now and then. But of course I've heard things.

"I'll tell you right here, you ain't the only one that'll be hearin' things before much longer." Another cautious glance around. "You don't happen to know anythin' about law, do you?"

"I've studied it some."

"Well, look here. I know some things about Dick Smiley, and if it was worth my while, I'd tell 'em. But you see, I am an honest man, an' I've got my livin' to make, an' he's just cute enough to lie about me an' try to drag me down with 'im. Folks might say I didn't quit him the first minute I found 'im out. I can't run no risks, you see."

"I can tell you this much — but, of course, it's none of my business."

"Go on."

"Well, it depends on the case. But if he has done anything serious, and if the authorities find it hard to get evidence against him,

you probably wouldn't have any trouble, even if you were right in with him. A man can turn state's evidence, you know."

"But I wasn't in with 'im. When I'd found him out, I quit him — the first good chance I got."

"Yes, of course. But it all depends. I couldn't tell you anything more, because I don't know the case. It all depends on how bad they want him."

"They want him bad enough." He dropped his voice, and leaned across the table. "Did you ever hear o' Whiskey Jim?"

"You don't mean to say —"

Roche nodded.

"Why, man, you're rich."

"How do you make that out?"

"Haven't you seen the papers?"

Roche shook his head.

"There's a reward of five thousand up for Whiskey Jim."

"Who'll give it?"

"The Consolidated Dealers. You see, there has been a counterfeit label, of the Red Seal brand, on the market; and I understand the liquor men have been running it down and

putting the Treasury Agents on the track to protect their business."

"Fi' thousand, eh? An' do you think we could make it?"

"If you have the evidence to convict this Whiskey Jim, we can. But now, before we go into this, what sort of an arrangement will you make with me if I steer it through for you?"

"What would you want?"

"Well — I should go at it something like this. I should go to the United States Treasury officials and tell them I could get them the evidence they want if they would agree not to prosecute us. It would take some managing, but it can be done. But I can't do it for nothing."

"What do you want?"

"Say one thousand. That's twenty per cent."

"Too much."

"Not for the work to be done. Remember, I agree to get you off without any more trouble than just giving in your evidence."

"But I don't need to get off. I ain't done nothin'."

"No, I understand. Of course not."

"Say five hundred, and it's a go."

"No, sir. I can't do it for that. I might take seven hundred and fifty, but — "

"It's too much, a —— sight too much. You'd ought to do it for less."

"Couldn't think of it."

"Well — "

"Is it a go?"

"I suppose so."

"All right. That's understood. If I can get the five thousand for you, you will hand me seven hundred and fifty. Now, I suppose the sooner we get at this, the better for both of us. When can I see you and talk it over?"

"You might come around this afternoon."

"Say two o'clock?"

"That's all right."

"Where do you live?"

"I'm stoppin' over on North Clark. Forty-two-seventy-two an' a half, third floor. You'll be around, then, will you, Mr. — Mr. — "

"Bedloe's my name. Yes, I'll be there at two sharp."

But at two o'clock, when Beveridge called at the boarding-house on North Clark Street he

found that Roche was gone. "He only stopped here a day," said the landlady. "This noon he paid me and said he was called out of town by a telegram."

"Did he say when he would be back?"

"He didn't know."

"Did he leave his things?"

"No. What little he had he took along."

Beveridge turned thoughtfully away and walked around the corner, where Wilson was awaiting him. He had no means of knowing that Roche was already well on the way to Spencer, where Smiley saw him a few days later.

"Not there, Bill?" asked Wilson.

"No, — skipped."

"Lost his nerve, eh?"

"I guess so."

"Well, what now?"

"Nothing, until I see Madge to-night."

"Do you really expect anything there?"

"I don't know. It's a chance, that's all."

"Do you think she'll keep her promise?"

"Couldn't say. I'll give her a chance, anyhow."

She did keep it. Very shortly after five,

while Beveridge was riding slowly up and down near the meeting-place, he saw her coming, and his eyes lighted up with surprise. He could not know how much thought had been given to the effect which pleased him so; he only observed that she looked like a young girl in her short wheeling skirt and leggings, and with her natty little cap and well-arranged hair.

They found St. Paul's Park gay with lights and music when they arrived. Dancing had been going on all the afternoon on the open-air platform. The ring-the-cane booth, the every-time-you-knock-the-baby-down-you-get-a-five-cent-cigar booth, were surrounded by uproarious country folk, with only here and there a city face among them. A little way down the slope, through the grove, ran the sluggish North Branch, a really inviting spot in the twilight; and to this spot it was that Beveridge led the way after checking the wheels.

"The boats don't amount to much," he said to Madge, as he helped her down the bank, "but I guess we can have a good time, anyhow."

She did not reply to this, but there was a

sparkle in her eyes and a flush on her cheek, as she stepped lightly into the boat, that drew an admiring glance from Beveridge.

He took the clumsy oars, and pulled upstream, under the railroad bridge, past all the other boats, on into the farming country, where the banks were green and shaded.

"Pretty nice, isn't it?" said he.

She nodded. They could hear the music in the distance, and occasionally the voices; but around them was nothing but the cool depths of an oak copse. She was half reclining in the stern, looking lazily at the dim muscular outlines of her oarsman. "You row well," she said.

"I ought to. I was brought up on water."

"You don't know how this takes me back," said Madge, dreamily. "I couldn't tell you how long it is since I have been out in the country like this."

He pulled a few strokes before replying, "Didn't McGlory ever take you out?"

"I don't like to think about him now. Let's talk of something else."

"I'm glad you don't like to. That's the only thing that bothers me."

"What — Joe?"

"Yes."

"Oh, he needn't bother you."

"I can't help it. You see, you're — "

"His wife? Yes, so I am. But I'm — "

"What, Madge?"

"I don't know what you would think if I said it."

"Say it, please."

She glanced into his face. He saw with surprise that her eyes were shining. "Well — I was — going to say — that — that — I'm about through with him."

"Do you mean that, Madge?"

She was silent; perhaps she had not meant to say so much.

"Has he been ugly to you?"

"It isn't his meanness altogether. If that were all, I could have stood it. I have tried hard enough to love him all the while. Even after he first struck me — "

"You don't mean — "

She smiled, half bitterly, and rolled her sleeve up above her elbow. Even in that faint light he could see the discoloration on her forearm. "He meant it for my head," she said.

"Why, he's a brute."

She smiled again. "Didn't you know that a woman can love a brute? It wasn't that. Even when he made me live in the saloon, and when I found out what his business really was — " she paused. "I was brought up a little better than this, you know."

"Yes, I have always thought that."

"And when I learned that he wasn't — well, honest, I don't believe I should have cared very much."

"Oh, I guess he is not dishonest, is he?"

"He is bad enough, I'm afraid. He — I don't know — I don't believe it would do any good to tell you — "

"No, don't, if you'd rather not, Madge."

"I don't care — I'd just as soon. You don't know what a relief it is to have somebody I can talk out with. I have guarded my tongue so long. And I suppose, even after all that is past, that if he hadn't left me — "

"You don't mean that he has gone?"

She nodded. "It comes to the same thing. He will drop in once in a while, I suppose. But he has gone back to the Lake with

Captain Smiley, and that means that he wants to see — " she turned toward the shadow of the oaks — " there's somebody up in Michigan that — that he — "

" Oh," said Beveridge.

" Yes, I have known it a long while." She turned, looked at him, and spoke impetuously: " Do you think I haven't been fair to him? Do you think he — anybody — could say I hadn't stood all a woman ought to stand? "

Her real emotion caught Beveridge off his guard. For an instant he hesitated; then he said gently: " Don't let it disturb you now, Madge. I don't think he can bother you much more. There is no reason why that shouldn't all slip into the past."

" I wish it could."

Beveridge was silent for a moment. He wished to lead her into telling all she knew about McGlory and his ways, yet he hesitated to abuse the confidence so frankly offered. But, however — " There is one thing about it, though, Madge," he said quietly. " If he is on the Lake, he will have to go where his boat goes, and there isn't much chance for him to get into bad ways. Even if, as you

think, he is dishonest, he will have to behave himself until he gets back to town."

"You don't understand," she cried. "It is just there, on the water, that he can do the most harm. I'm going to tell you, anyway. I don't care. He is a smuggler, or a moonshiner, or something, — I don't know what you would call it."

"A moonshiner — here in Chicago!"

She nodded nervously. "He is only one of them. I have known it for a long time, and sometimes I have thought I ought to speak out, but then he — oh, you don't know what a place he has put me into — what he has dragged me to! There is one thing I will say for Joe, — he is not the worst of them. The rest are smarter than he is, and I believe they have used him for a cat's-paw. But he is bad enough."

"You don't know how hard this is to believe, Madge. That a man sailing on a decent lumber schooner can manage to do enough moonshining — or even smuggling — to hurt anybody —"

"But that is just it! It is in the lumber."

"In the lumber!" He had stopped row-

ing, and was leaning forward. Had her own excitement been less, she could hardly have failed to observe the eager note in his voice.

"Yes — oh, I know about it. But it's no use saying anything. They will never catch the head man — he is too smart for them — "

Beveridge took her hand, and held it gently in both his own. "Don't let's think any more about any of them, Madge. I don't wonder it excites you — it would anybody. But you are through with them all now."

She sat up, rigid, and looked at him. "Are you sure I am?"

"Yes."

"But how? Joe is my husband. Tell me what you mean. What am I to think? You see what I have done. I have let you bring me out here; I have — I have told you things that could put Joe in prison. Do you — do you mean that you can help me — that I can get free from him?"

For a moment Beveridge thought of turning and rowing back. But he was not yet through. The conversation had taken an unexpected turn, but he would not retreat now.

"You are willing to be free?" he whispered.

"Oh — yes."

"To leave him forever?"

"Yes."

"Then we understand each other, Madge. It may take some time."

"I don't care — I don't care for anything now."

"I shall have to do some thinking."

"Do you think it will be hard?"

"No, but we shall see. Shall we start back — I'm afraid you won't get home till pretty late, now."

"It doesn't matter; I'm alone there now, you know. But still, perhaps we'd better."

As they rowed down the stream, and later, on the ride back to the city, Beveridge could not but be fascinated by Madge, in the flow of spirits that had come with the freedom of this evening. She liked to look at him and to laugh at his little jokes. She caressed him in a hundred ways with her voice and her eyes. She rode her wheel with the lightness of youth, and led the way flying down the paved streets of the city. And when at last she dismounted at "The Teamster's

Friend," and unlocked the side door, she was in a merry glow.

"Come in," she said.

"Don't you want to get to sleep? It is late."

"I'm not tired. We must have something to eat after that ride. Wasn't it fine?"

So he went in with her, and they sat down to a cold lunch in the dining room.

When he rose to go, and they were both lingering in the dining-room door, he said, smiling, "By the way, Madge, while I think of it, I want an empty bottle."

"Come out into the bar-room. You can help yourself."

She lighted the gas for him, and he went in behind the bar and rummaged among some bottles and flasks that stood on the floor. At length he found one that seemed to suit him, and stood a moment looking intently at the label.

"Do you find what you want?"

"Yes, this will do first-rate."

She followed him to the door, and said, as he stood on the step, "When am I to see you again?"

"In a few days."

"Not to-morrow?"

"No, I'm afraid not. I expect to be out of the city over Sunday. I have to go where I'm sent, you know."

"Do you know," she said, with a smile, "you have not told me anything about your business? Why, I hardly think I know anything about you."

"You will soon know enough."

She smiled again. "Wait, you will have to be a little careful about coming. Mr. Murphy goes away about ten o'clock every night. You might come a little later, and then if Joe isn't here, I will be down. If you don't see me, you mustn't ask any questions."

"I won't."

"And you will be thinking about —"

"Yes. We'll talk it over next time. Good night."

"Good night," she replied. And when he had walked a little way, he heard her humming a tune to herself in the doorway.

Wilson was sitting in the shadow on the steps of the lumber office. He rose and came forward.

"Hello, Bill!"

"That you, Bert?"

"What's left of me. If I'd known you were going to be gone half the night, I'd have brought a blanket."

"Couldn't help it."

"I suppose not. Not even if she'd been fifty-five, with red hair and a squint, eh?"

Beveridge, instead of laughing, made an impatient gesture. "Come out here in the light, Bert. Nobody around, is there?"

"No. Our friend the policeman went by ten minutes ago. Just as well he didn't see you with your friend. They say he's a chum of McGlory's."

"See what you think of this," said Bedloe, drawing the bottle from under his coat.

"Hello, you don't mean to say you've got it?"

"Take a good look."

"Yes, sir. Well, I'll be——! There's the red seal, and the left foot a little out of drawing, and the right hand turned out instead of in, and — is it? — yes, an imperfection in the capital *C*. Yes, sir, you've got it! I won't say another word, Bill. You're

a wizard. You must have hypnotized her."

"Well, I got it. No matter how. And I got something else, too. Here, step into the lumber yard before we're seen. Stenzenberger doesn't keep a private watchman, does he?"

"No. He doesn't need it, with his friendly hold on the police."

A board was loose in the rear fence. Within a very few minutes the two men were stepping cautiously between the piles of lumber, Beveridge peering eagerly into the shadows, his companion watching him and following close behind.

"Wish we'd brought a lantern, Bill."

"I thought of it. But it would hardly be safe."

"Come this way — over by the Murphy and McGlory shed. That's where it would have to be handled."

Silently they tiptoed forward, reaching out with their hands to avoid a collision with the projecting timbers. Once Beveridge tripped and would have fallen if Wilson had not caught his arm. "Wait — keep still, Bert!"

"It's all right. We're way back from the street here."

"It isn't the street I'm watching. See that light?" He pointed up to a second-story window in the adjoining building. "She's still up; and it's awful quiet around here."

A moment later Beveridge stopped and sniffed.

"What is it, Bill?"

"Don't you smell anything?"

"Ye-yes, guess I do, a little. But there are a lot of old kegs and bottles on the other side of the fence."

"There are no old kegs about this." He moved forward, feeling and sniffing his way along a pile of twelve-by-twelve timbers. "Here, have you that big jack-knife on you, Bert?"

"Yes; here it is."

Cautiously, very cautiously, Beveridge began prying at the end of one of the big sticks.

"Shall I lend a hand, Bill?"

"No; it's got to be done without leaving any signs of our being here. It may take time — the thing is in for keeps, all right."

During fully a quarter of an hour they stood

there, Beveridge prying with the long blade of the knife, his companion watching him without a word. Finally Beveridge gave a suppressed exclamation.

"Fetched her?"

"Yes. Take hold — easy now."

Together they pulled a long, circular plug from the end of the timber, and set it on the ground.

"Just put your arm in there, Bert."

"Well, I'll be ——! Did she tell you about this?"

"She certainly did."

"But how did you do it, man, without letting on?"

"Never mind about that," replied Beveridge, shortly.

"Yes, sir. It's all there — no end of it."

"All right now; that's enough. Let's put the plug back. Now's the time for us to go slow."

"You're right there. Even with this it will be awful hard to bring it home. The next thing to get is the man. I wish we knew where that fellow Roche went. What do you think?"

"I'd be willing to buy him a new hat if he isn't on the train for northern Michigan just about now. But we don't need him very bad. We want a bigger man than him."

CHAPTER VII

DRAWING TOGETHER

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THE eleven days Dick had given her for considering were going faster than any other days Annie had known. To make it worse, she had to pass them alone, for Beveridge, who was always diverting, hardly appeared after Dick sailed away. It was now the afternoon of the tenth day, a bright, cool afternoon with a southerly breeze and a rippling lake. She was in her room, looking out at the pier, where the *Schmidt* lay, when a voice caught her ear. She stepped nearer to the window and then could see Beveridge and his friend Wilson standing on the beach. While she looked, Wilson said good-by, and strolled over to the pier; and Beveridge turned irresolutely toward the house on stilts, looking up at the flowering balcony.

Annie remembered that she had not watered

her flowers. She always waited until the shadows crept around to the eastern side of the house; they were here now, so, filling her pitcher, she stepped out. Beveridge, fully recovered from the odd sensations of his evening with Madge, raised his cap, but found that she had turned her back on him and was absorbed in her forget-me-nots. "Annie," he called, "aren't you going to speak to me?"

"Oh," — she came to the railing, — "oh, how do you do?"

"Won't you come out?"

"Why — I suppose I might."

"All right. I'll wait down here." When she appeared on the steps, he suggested a sail.

"I don't mind — if the wind holds. It's not very strong, and it may go down with the sun." She was looking about from lake to sky with the easy air of a veteran mariner; and he was looking at her.

"Let's chance it."

So they pushed out; and at the moment when Dick and the *Merry Anne* were coasting along the bluffs above Grosse Pointe the *Captain* was skimming out on a long tack for the Lake View reef.

Little was said until they were entering on the second mile, then this from Beveridge, lounging on the windward rail, "Have you been thinking about our talk that evening, Annie?"

"Oh, dear!" thought she; but she said nothing.

"You haven't forgotten what I said?"

"Oh, the evening you came up for me?"

"Yes, and Smiley came later."

"But you don't — you don't want me to think that you meant — "

"But I did, Annie. Do you remember I told you I thought I had a fair chance to be something in the world? Well, I'm nearer it than I thought, even then. There are a good many things I'm going to tell you some day, — not just yet, — but when you know them, you'll understand why I've dared to talk this way. If I didn't believe I was going to be able to do for you all you could want, and more; if I didn't feel pretty sure I could help you to grow up away from this beach, to get into surroundings that will set you off as you deserve, I'd never have said a word. But I *can* do these things, Annie. And if I could only

know that I had the right to do them for you — I want to take you away from here."

"But I don't want to leave the beach."

"I know — I think I understand just how you feel. It's natural — you were born here — you've never seen anything else. But I can't stay here, and I can't go without you. I can't get along anywhere without you."

"But — "

"What, Annie?"

"You've got along very — very well, lately."

"No — that's just it, I haven't. My work has kept me out of town."

"Your work?"

"Yes, I've — "

"Mr. Beveridge, are you a student, or aren't you?"

"I — "

"Tell me, please. Some of the things you have said I don't understand."

"Well — no, I'm not."

"Then what you have said hasn't been true?"

"No — some of it hasn't."

"And yet you — " She hesitated.

"In a very little while, Annie, — maybe

only a day or two, — some surprising things are going to happen. I wish I could tell you, but I can't. I have been perfectly honest with you, — no, don't look at me that way; it is true, — and if I have misled you in one or two little things, it was only because I couldn't honestly tell you the whole truth yet. A few days more, and you shall know everything. I'm not a student. If I were, I could never offer you what I do offer you now." He straightened up, his eyes lighted, and an eager note in his voice compelled her attention. "I have made a big strike, Annie, or so near it that it can't get away from me now. I have no earthly business to tell you this, — I never talked so to any one before, — but I have offered you everything, myself and all I have, and it would be poor business not to trust you with part of my secrets, too. I want you to know, because I trust you; and because I — I'm going to be able to spare you some disagreeable scenes." He leaned forward. "Tell me, Annie, when does Dick Smiley come back?"

She turned and looked up the Lake. His eyes followed hers; there, on the horizon, were the white sails of the *Merry Anne*.

"Then I can tell you sooner than I thought — to-morrow. To-morrow night I'll tell you everything. And maybe you will tell me too — everything. Will you, Annie? If I come for you to-morrow night and tell you all about myself, will you give me your answer?"

She was still looking northward; to-morrow was Dick's eleventh day. "I can't," she said slowly; "I have an engagement for to-morrow evening."

"Not — not with him?"

She nodded.

"Break it, Annie, break it. Or no, wait — I won't say that. We'll just leave it. I'm willing to let it work itself out. I think, maybe, when to-morrow comes, you won't want to see him any more than I want you to. I won't tell you he's a rascal; I'd rather let you find it out for yourself. I want you to know why I've spoken out this way, and how hard I have tried to save you from doing something you would regret all your life."

She was bewildered.

"Tell me this, Annie, — haven't you an aunt or anything here in town?"

"Yes," — her voice was hardly audible,

— "Aunt Lizzie lives up by the water-works."

"Do you go up there much?"

"Sometimes."

"Won't you go to-day, and stay over till to-morrow about this time?"

"Why?"

"It may save you annoyance. I think some disagreeable things are going to happen here — I'd rather not have you at home. It's only on your own account."

"I don't see what can happen to me at home."

"Nothing will happen to *you*, but don't ask me to tell you now. To-morrow evening I'll come up for you and bring you down, and then I'll tell everything. You see, I must have your answer to-morrow. I shall probably have to go right away, and I couldn't go thinking I had left this — the one thing of all that I care about — unsettled. I want you to know that everything in the world I have to offer you is yours forever. I want you to know this, and then, when you've thought it over and realized what it means for both of us, I want you to come to me and give me your

hand and tell me that — that it's all right — that you give me everything, too." A long silence. "Let's sail up toward the water-works now, Annie. I can drop you off there at the pier, and bring the *Captain* down alone."

She looked again toward the *Merry Anne.*

He read her thoughts. "We needn't pass near her. We'll run in close to the shore."

She shook her head. "I'm going to turn back."

And back they turned. In vain he urged her, reproached her, pleaded with her; hardly a word could he get during all the run back to the beach. He pulled up the boat for her, and walked by her side to the steps. There, with an odd pressure of the lips, she shook her head at him, as if afraid to trust her voice, and mounted the steps.

"Annie, you haven't told me. Will you go?"

She shook her head again, and entered the house. Beveridge, motionless, looked after her. Finally he turned, and glanced with a troubled air at the approaching schooner, then at the sleepy pier, where he could see Wilson stretched out flat holding out a bamboo fish-

pole over the water. Behind the house Captain Fargo was mending his nets. Beveridge heard him humming a song as he worked, and after hesitating a moment longer walked around and greeted him.

"How do you do, Captain."

"How are you?" The fisherman straightened his spare old figure and looked at the young man. His face was brown above the beard, and crisscrossed with innumerable fine wrinkles. Beveridge knew, in meeting those faded blue eyes with their patient, subdued expression, that he was facing a man whom he could trust.

"I have something to say to you, Captain, that may be a surprise, — I want Annie."

"You want her?"

"Yes. You may think I've not known her very long, but it has been long enough to show me that I can't go on any longer without her."

Captain Fargo stood for a moment without replying, then asked simply, "What does she say?"

"It isn't settled; I have told her how I feel, and asked her for an answer to-morrow night."

"Isn't she a little young?"

"I don't think so."

"And you — you're a student?"

"No, I'm not."

"Do you think you could support her? I'm afraid we have taught her to expect more than our position would seem to make right."

"Yes, I can support her comfortably. You see, I —"

"Hasn't Annie told me you were a student?"

"Yes, I told her that, myself. There was a reason for it, Captain. The situation is unusual, and my only chance of keeping her out of what is to come lies in talking it out plainly with you." He swept the beach with a swift glance, stepped close to the older man, and spoke rapidly and eagerly in a subdued voice.

The Captain removed his hat, and looked out over the water with a distressed expression. "Are you sure you are right about this?" he asked, when Beveridge had finished.

"Perfectly."

"You know, it is generally easy to prove a thing when your mind's set on it."

"There is no doubt whatever. My mind is set on nothing but carrying out my orders. Do you think I would tell you this if I didn't have the whole case right in my hands — cold? I tell you, I've got it. It's the end of one of the worst cases in fifty years."

"Well, I don't know. I hate to think it."

"In my business we learn not to think anything. I always thought Maxwell would live and die in the work. If there was a clean man and a good friend to me anywhere on earth, it was Tommy Maxwell. But he had this work before me, and they paid him I don't know how much to cover the scent and skip to Mexico. After all his experience, Tommy couldn't walk by that offer, and now he must end up in Mexico for it. If I told you about the men and the methods that I have had to fight in this business, you would find it hard to believe me. In some ways it has been even a dangerous case." This was Beveridge's first opportunity to free his mind, and his tongue was threatening to run loose. He was speaking with a certain pride. "You know there is one of us shot, on the average, every year, in this work."

"I don't know," said Fargo again. "Maybe you are right about her going. It wouldn't be pleasant for her. I'll speak to her mother about it."

"Of course, the sooner the better."

"Yes. I'll go in now."

"One minute, Captain. You understand, don't you, my putting it before you? It's just to spare Annie. There may be rough work."

"Yes, I understand."

"You'll hardly find it necessary to tell Mrs. Fargo what I have told you."

"No, I suppose not. Though it would be perfectly safe with her."

"If you don't mind, I'd rather not."

"Very well."

The Captain went into the house; and Beveridge walked away. The *Merry Anne* was at the moment coming slowly in toward the north side of the pier.

When he had nearly reached the pier, Beveridge turned and stood frowning and snapping his fingers. A glance told him that Wilson had just hauled out a fine perch and was baiting his hook for another. He turned toward

the house, and found that the Captain was approaching him.

"Well," said Beveridge, "will she go?"

"I haven't said anything yet. I thought I'd turn it over in my mind. Aren't you pretty young for this work, Mr. Beveridge?"

"Not so very. Do as you like about it. I have said all I can."

"Oh, it's all right, of course; well, I'll step in and see how Annie feels about going."

A second time they parted, and a second time Beveridge walked away. He looked over his shoulder, and saw Annie running down the beach for something she had left in the *Captain*. He hurried back and intercepted her.

"Annie."

"Yes."

"I don't know if you understand — you see, I have gone a good way in telling you what I have —"

"Oh, of course, if you want to take it back —"

"But I don't. Not a word of it. I was only going to say —" he hesitated again. She waited. "It isn't what I have asked you for myself; that stands, Annie, and always will.

It's the other. Don't you see how I have put myself in your hands? I never did such a thing before in my life. Just by letting you know that there's going to be something going on here to-night, and by asking you to be away, I have put a lot of power in your hands. You won't mind — you won't be offended — if I ask you not to breathe a word of it to a soul?"

He waited, hoping for some reassuring word or sign, but she only looked at him with wide eyes.

"You see a chance word might undo everything. If —" he glanced out toward the two schooners — "if a hint of the facts gets out there to him — don't you see? It simply can't happen. You know why I've told you. It was because I love you, because I want to save you from it all, — that's why I've put myself in your hands."

But all she said was, "Don't say any more; I must go in."

He was silent. But with one foot on the first step, she turned. "Wait, tell me —"

"Yes?"

"Tell me — have you anything to do with

that revenue cutter that was in here the other day?"

"Oh, dear Annie, you mustn't ask me that."

Then she hurried into the house.

In the kitchen Captain Fargo was trying to tell his wife some half-truths, never an easy thing for him to do.

"But what is it? What's the trouble? I don't see that anything could happen here that it would hurt her to see."

"It wouldn't hurt her, but it really would be better to take her up to Lizzie's. You and she could come back together to-morrow."

"Oh, it's me too! Now what is all this about, anyway?"

The Captain, instead of replying, spoke to himself: "I can't believe it. There has been a mistake made. They never should have sent a boy of his age to do such work."

"What work? Is there something you have promised not to tell me?"

"Yes, there is. Don't ask me what it is. Just talk it over with Annie, and see if she won't go with you up to Lizzie's."

Mrs. Fargo threw a glance at her husband, hesitated, then went up to Annie's room.

"Let me in, dear." Annie obeyed. "I want you to put on your things and go out with me."

"Not to Aunt Lizzie's?"

"Yes. Your father thinks —"

"Has *he* been talking to father, then?"

"Your father and I have been talking it over. He hasn't told me just why he asks it —"

"But I know."

"Oh, do you?" There was a note of burning curiosity in these three words.

"Yes, I do. And I don't believe a word of it."

"It's nothing very bad, I hope?"

"Oh, I don't mean that I understand it all, but I know something about it. Mr. Beveridge had no right to go to father."

"Oh, it was Mr. Beveridge?"

"Yes, it was. Tell me, mother, did he — do you know what else he said?"

"No, I haven't asked him. But he wants us to go very much, and I don't think we had better say anything."

"He wants you to go, too?"

"Yes."

"Now, mother, you won't think I'm very bad if I — don't go?"

"I'm afraid your father —"

"Father doesn't understand it himself, I'm sure. It is all a mistake —"

"Your father thinks that, too."

"Oh, does he? Then he won't mind if I don't go!"

"I don't know. I'll tell him what you say." The mother slipped out, and returned to the kitchen. "She doesn't want to go, father."

"But I have asked her to. I can't explain to you, or her —"

"She seems to know more than you do. She says it's a mistake."

"It is; it must be. But I said —"

"Now, father, don't you think we'd just better not say anything more? Nobody is going to hurt us in our own home."

"No, he said that himself."

"Well, now, suppose we just let her have her way. I could see something was troubling her, and I think she'd best be let alone."

The Captain had done what he could, so now he returned to his nets and left his wife to begin getting supper.

Beveridge was standing at the shore end of the pier waiting for Wilson, fish-pole on shoulder, to approach. "Well, what luck, Bert?"

Wilson held up a small string of perch. "Fair. It's too late in the day to catch many."

"Going up to the house?"

"Yes, I guess so."

Then their voices dropped.

"Where will you be, Bill?"

"In the park here, by the road. You'll be back early?"

"Yes, soon as I can make the arrangements."

"You have spoken to them at head-quarters?"

"Yes."

"All right. So long."

"So long."

At seven o'clock, after supper, Captain Fargo was hailed by Henry Smiley.

"How are you, Henry? Glad to see you. You haven't been around much lately."

"No, too busy."

"On your way up-town?"

"No, just been. I ran out of tobacco and went up to get some. I generally live on the schooner, you know. I have no other place to go to. That's the devil of it, Cap'n, when you get to be my age without a home or a near relation. There isn't a soul that cares anything about me."

"I guess you need some supper. Come in with us, 'tain't all cold yet."

"That wouldn't help any. I've had enough to eat."

"What do you mean by talking about your age? You're young yet."

"Do you call forty-five young?"

"What do you think of me? I'm most sixty."

"That's another story. When you go, you'll leave something behind to show that your life was worth living."

"I wasn't much younger than you when I married."

"None o' that for me," said Henry, with a sort of smile. "I never was minded to it. If you have seen anything worth while about living, you're lucky. I never could."

"Look here, Henry, I don't like to hear

you talking that way. What's the matter with you?"

Another questionable smile. "I'll tell you how it looks to me. We have to live with a pack of rascals, and heaven help the fools!"

"Henry, you're enough to give a man the blues."

"I've had enough to-day to give 'em to me. To tell the truth, Cap'n, I don't know what to make of Dick. I'm afraid he is one of the fools."

"There isn't anything serious the matter, is there?" This was said nervously.

"He's young, and independent. He has no idea of easing off his own notions so as to keep things running smooth with other people. I've done everything a man could to help him get on, but it's no use; he antagonizes the only people who can help him. He's bristling all the time. A couple of weeks ago he just naturally got sick of his mate and fired him. I smoothed things over and got the Cap'n to suggest another. And now he's fired this one, and won't have him on his schooner at all, — and I've had to take him in for the night."

"Wasn't there any reason?"

"Reason — yes. I know he means to tell the whole story, but he has no idea how hasty he is sometimes. McGlory's so ugly I could hardly trust my own self with him. I thought the best thing would be to walk off for a while, and maybe we'd both cool off."

"Dick's all right, though, isn't he? No — no trouble, or anything?"

"Why? Been hearing anything?"

"I — I've thought he wasn't quite himself lately."

"Why did you think that?"

"Oh, I couldn't say, exactly."

"Why, no, I don't think he's in any trouble." Henry smiled again. "I suppose you know as much as I do what's bothering him."

"No. What is it?"

"Well now, see here, if it's that way, I oughtn't to say anything. But you don't quite follow. Surely, you know. Just about the little girl."

"My Annie?"

"Yes. Of course we all know how Dick feels there."

"Well, I've thought of it, of course."

"That's another thing that's been bothering me. He's got no earthly business to think of such a thing. I don't know what to make of him, anyhow. I used to think I understood him, but Lord! he has new sides to him every day — you might as well try to organize a volcano. It's kind of discouraging. He's the nearest approach to something to care about I've got, and if he would only let me, I'd like to sort o' push him along. But I don't know — I don't know."

"I'm afraid I misled you a little just now, Henry."

"How's that?"

"What I said about not having heard — I *have* heard something."

"About Dick?"

"Yes. I can't tell you what. I know it isn't so, but it has bothered me."

"What sort of thing — about his character?"

"In a way — yes."

Henry looked sharply at the Captain with an expression of doubt and uncertainty. Then he half turned away.

"You aren't going, Henry?"

"Yes, guess I'd better, and see what McGlory's up to. I'd let him go back to the city, but I want to see Cap'n Stenzenberger before he does. Good night."

Henry walked out on the pier to his schooner.

The evening came slowly on and settled over the lake. The breeze, instead of dropping with the sun, had freshened, and now was stirring up little waves that lapped the two schooners and the piling under the pier. Annie, sitting out on her balcony in an inconspicuous dress, her arms on the railing, was listening and watching — and waiting. She had heard Henry say good night to her father, and had seen him walk out on the pier until he was lost among the lumber piles. She saw the afterglow die in the north, the red-gold lake fade to amber, to gray-blue, almost to black, while the twinkle of the lighthouse on the point grew into a powerful beacon and sent an arrow of light deep into the water. She watched the horizon line grow dimmer and dimmer until it disappeared, and sky and lake blended in

darkness. All was quiet on the pier. The lights of the schooners swayed lazily; occasionally a voice floated in over the water, a quiet, matter-of-fact voice. She looked up the beach, down the beach; all was peaceful.

But there was no quiet in Annie's heart. She was rigid; her hands were clasped; her eyes shifted nervously from point to point. Once she got up and went into her room and tried to read; but in a few moments she was back. And there she sat until the late twilight had darkened into night.

Then she rose, passed through the room, leaving the light burning, stepped out into the hall, and softly, very softly, closed the door. She stood motionless, still holding the knob. Her father and mother were in the sitting room quietly talking. She went slowly down the stairs, stepping cautiously over the one squeaky step, and slipped through the hall. The sitting-room door was closed.

"Annie?"

"Yes, mother."

"Is that you?"

"Yes, I'm out here."

"What is it?"

"Nothing. I'm going out for a breath of air."

"Where are you going?"

"Oh, not far."

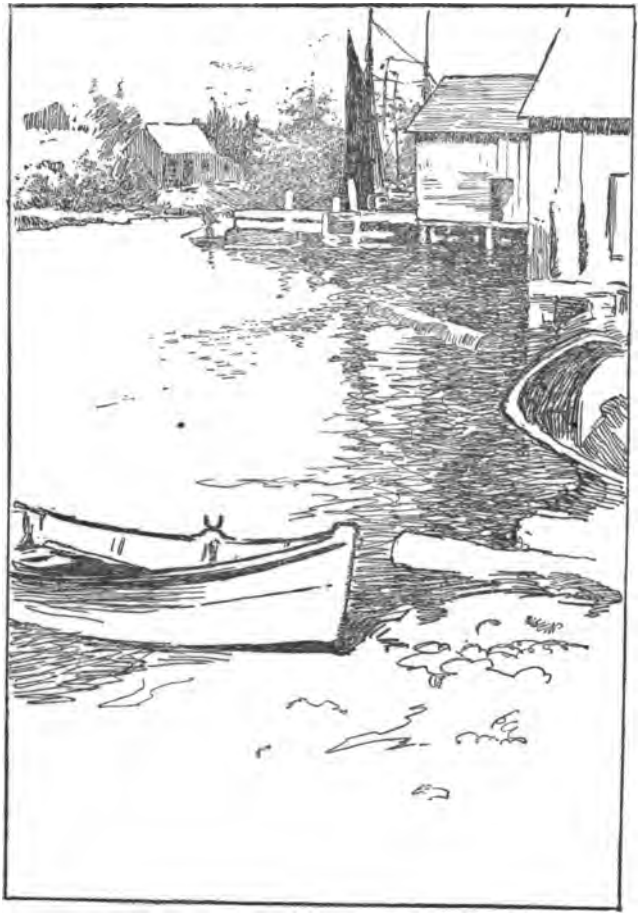
"Come in soon, won't you?"

"Yes, of course. I'm not going off anywhere."

There was apparently no further need for quiet, yet she was half a minute closing the front door after her. Again she looked up and down the beach. She could see the street now on the low bluff; but no one appeared within the light of the corner gas lamp. Then she hurried along the beach, climbed up on the pier by some rough steps that she knew, and walked rapidly out toward the schooner, stepping on the balls of her feet, and avoiding loose planks.

CHAPTER VIII

THE EVENING OF THE SAME DAY



CHAPTER VIII

THE EVENING OF THE SAME DAY

ONCE within the shadow of the lumber Annie paused. Not a sound came from the two schooners. She knew that the *Merry Anne* lay to leeward, on the north side, and after a moment of listening and a glance behind she turned toward it, making her way by feeling the lumber until she found an opening. In another moment she stood at the edge of the pier, looking down on the schooner. At first she thought Dick must be asleep, for there was no light in the cabin; then she saw him sitting on the cabin trunk, his hands clasped about his knees, his pipe between his teeth, his eyes fixed on the dark water. The night was still, the lapping of the ripples was the only sound.

"Dick," she whispered.

He turned with a start and removed his pipe. Though he looked directly toward her,

he evidently could not see her, for her black dress blended with the shadows.

"Dick," she said again.

This time he ducked under the boom and came across to the rail. "Who's there?"

"It's me, Dick. I'm coming down."

"No, wait." He stepped up beside her, and added, in a low, uncertain voice, "You might wake Pink; he's sleeping below." And before she knew it, his pipe lay on a plank and he had taken both her hands. "You came out to see me, Annie?"

"Yes, but wait, Dick; I don't know how to tell you — I couldn't help coming — "

He waited for her to go on, but she could not. She could not even withdraw her hands, but stood motionless, her wits fluttering. Finally he spoke: —

"You said you came to tell me — "

"Not that, Dick — not what you think. It's something else."

He released her hands. He even, in his bewilderment, took up his pipe again.

"I've found something out, Dick. I couldn't let it go by without telling you. It's about — Mr. Beveridge."

"Oh," said Dick.

"Did you think he was a student?"

"Yes, I thought so."

"Well, he isn't at all."

"Oh," said Dick again. And then, "Isn't he?"

"No, he has something to do with — don't you understand what I'm getting at, Dick?"

He shook his head.

"Are you going to make me tell you?"

"You needn't tell me anything you don't want to, Annie."

"O dear, I don't understand it myself, much of it; but I thought you would if what he says is true."

"It's something about me, then?"

"Yes, Dick, — and the revenue cutter."

"The revenue cutter?"

"Yes, the *Foote*. He has something to do with her."

"He's a revenue officer, then?"

"Yes, or something. I don't know just what he is. But you understand it now, don't you?"

"Not a bit."

"But you must, Dick. He says something is going to happen, right here."

"On the pier?"

"Yes."

"When?"

"Now — to-night. I was afraid it would be before I could get out here. And I had to wait till dark, you know."

"But how do you know all this, Annie?"

"Mr. Beveridge — Mr. Beveridge told me more than he meant to, I guess. And then he talked with father. And father and mother both tried to make me go up to Aunt Lizzie's early this evening, so I wouldn't be here. It was to save me from something, they said."

"But I don't see, Annie —"

"Why don't you go, Dick. I've come out here to tell you, so you can sail away before he comes. Then you won't have any trouble. There's a mistake, I know; and when they have found it out, you can come back."

"Oh, I couldn't do that, Annie. I have no reason to go away. If anybody wants to see me, he knows where he can find me."

This silenced Annie. She looked at Dick, and then looked away from him, out over the Lake, not knowing what to say or think.

"You came out just to warn me, Annie?"

She nodded.

"There must be something more then — something you haven't told me."

"No — only he — Mr. Beveridge said a good deal — he tried to make me believe you were — dishonest, or something."

"And you didn't believe it?"

She made no reply to this. She was beginning to think about getting back to the house. When Dick spoke again, it was in a gentler voice.

"I'm glad you came out, Annie, mighty glad. And I know you'll be glad to find out that he is wrong."

"Oh, I know that — "

"But there must have been some things I don't understand at all. I don't know but what it's a good thing he is here. If he can clear it up, it will be better for all of us. So I'll stay right here, and if he wants me, he can have me. That's no reason why I should dodge any man living."

"I knew it — I'm glad — "

Then Dick's reserve broke down. He caught her hands again. "But you can't tell me your coming out here doesn't mean

anything, Annie. You've told me already what I didn't dare to ask you."

"No, Dick, let me go. I'm going back."

"But after this — you can't put me off now, Annie. Don't you see? It's no use trying to make me think you would have done this for anybody, because you wouldn't. I know it, and you know it."

"Now, Dick, please! I'm afraid —"

"If you only knew how I've felt this trip, — what a regular hell it has been, — you wouldn't keep me waiting any longer. I know to-morrow's the time; and I wouldn't have said a word to-night if you hadn't come out here. But you *are* here, and you have let me know so much that it's only a matter of saying a word. You can't blame me if I take your coming that way."

Annie was struggling, and Dick in his eagerness was holding her tightly. But she got her hands free now and turned away.

"Let me go back with you, Annie. I — I'll try not to bother you. I didn't mean to just now. Hang it, I never can trust myself when —"

"No, you mustn't come."

"Not even good night, Annie?"

But she hurried off without a word into the shadows, and felt her way nervously until she reached the central roadway, where it was lighter. It was now getting on toward nine o'clock, and nothing had happened. Perhaps nothing was going to happen, after all. What with her hope that it all might be a mistake, and her fear that she had come on a fool's errand, Annie was in a pretty state of mind. She did not know what to make of Beveridge; she did not know what to make of herself; the natural thing, apparently, was to get angry with Dick, and this she was rapidly doing.

When she was passing the last but one of the lumber piles, hurrying along with less caution than she had used in coming out, a man appeared out of the shadow and blocked the way. She stepped aside and tried to run by, but he, as quick as she, stepped aside too and caught her wrist. Then she saw that it was Beveridge.

"Let me go!" she said breathlessly.

"No, Annie, wait. You decided to warn him, did you?"

"Let me go. You have no right to hold me."

"Yes I have, more right than you know. Now tell me, why did you do it?"

"Mr. Beveridge—"

"You must wait, Annie. No one is going to hurt you. If you had known what you were doing, you never would have come. It's no place for a woman. But now that you have done this, now that you are here, I think you had better stay and see with your own eyes what you have done. Then perhaps you will believe me."

Poor Annie could say nothing more. Her head whirled. She let him lead her back along the roadway.

Close to the spot where she had turned off to reach the schooner Beveridge stopped. In a moment he was joined by another man.

"Bert?"

"Yes. What is it? Want me to take her home?"

"No. Wait here, in case I call. And have an eye on the other boat."

"You aren't going to take her back there?"

"Never you mind what I'm going to do."

"But look here, Bill! This is no place for—"

"Do what you're told and keep still."

Annie heard this muttered conversation without taking it in. Beveridge still held her wrist, held it tighter than he knew, but she was hardly conscious of this either. She was caught up and whirled along on the high wind of events. She was conscious only of Beveridge, of a new side to his character. The young man she had known on the beach and aboard the *Captain* had vanished. This Beveridge was hard, irresistible; his manner, the atmosphere about him, spoke of some object that must be reached without regard to obstacles. Her Beveridge had been friendly, considerate; there was nothing considerate about this man. And yet, a part of his object was to convince her that he was right and that Dick was wrong; and she knew why.

Dick had gone back to his seat on the cabin trunk. Beveridge, gripping Annie's wrist, stood at the pier edge, and looked down.

"Smiley," he said.

Dick crossed the deck. "I'm Smiley. What is it?"

"I shall have to ask you to come away with me."

"Who are you?"

"Beveridge, special agent of the United States Treasury Department."

"Well, what do you want me for?" Dick was peering forward, trying to make out the figure in the background.

"I guess it isn't necessary to tell you that; I'll give you a minute to get what things you need."

"Who have you got there?"

"It's me, Dick."

"Annie!" Dick leaped up to the pier. "Have you dragged her out here to see—"

"Get back there on your schooner, Smiley. It won't be necessary to do any talking. Anything you say is likely to be used against you. Get back there."

Dick looked at him a moment, then jumped down. Beveridge followed, helping Annie, none too gently.

"Where's your man Harper?"

"Pink," called Dick. "Pink, come up here."

In a moment the sleepy mate appeared.

"Harper," said Beveridge, "get an axe. Be quick about it."

Pink looked at Dick, who said, "Go ahead. Do whatever he tells you."

The axe was brought and handed to Beveridge.

"Now, Smiley, you and your man go below, please."

"Below?"

"To the hold. I'll follow."

"Pink," said Dick, "get a lantern."

They had to wait a minute, while Pink was lighting the lantern. There they stood, without speaking, each watching the other. Finally Pink led the way to the open hatch, and descended the ladder. Dick followed. Beveridge led Annie to the opening. "Wait," he said; "I'll go first, and help you down."

Dick, standing below on the timbers, looked up like a flash. "I wouldn't try to bring her down here if I were you."

"I'm not talking to you, Smiley."

"No, but you will be if you bully her much longer. Just try to make her go down that ladder. Try it!"

Beveridge, without heeding, turned to Annie.

When he turned back, Dick, with itching fingers, stood on the deck beside him.

"What are you doing here? Didn't I tell you to go below?"

"Annie," said Dick, "just say the word — just look at me — if you want — look here, Mister Beveridge, I don't know much about law, but it seems to me you haven't shown me any papers, and, until you do, you can have your choice of letting go of her hand or losing your front teeth. Just whichever you like."

But Beveridge did neither. "No, Smiley," said he, "we won't get into that sort o' talk." After which remark, he stooped over and looked down at Pink and his lantern, and at the timbers on which Pink was standing. "I guess maybe you can see without going down, Annie. Sit down here, and watch what I do. Go ahead, Smiley."

Dick again descended the ladder, and the special agent followed, axe in hand. Annie, with horrified eyes, sat limp against the hatch and took in every motion in that dimly lighted group below. She saw Dick and Harper stand aside; she saw Beveridge raise the axe a little way and bring it down sharply

"Gazing into the square black hole."

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on the end of a stick of timber, — an end that was marked with a circular groove; she saw the timber split open, and a plug fall out; she saw Beveridge stoop and dip his fingers in a brown liquid that was flowing from some sort of a broken receptacle; she smelled whiskey. She was confused, she had only a half understanding of what it meant, but she shivered as if a cold wind were blowing upon her; and when they had all three mounted to the deck and were standing about her, she was still sitting there, holding to something, she knew not what, and gazing with fascinated eyes into the square black hole, — blacker than at first, now that Harper was holding the lantern before her on the deck. But she knew when Beveridge stepped forward to help her up, only to be brushed aside by Dick, who raised her gently, with a low exclamation of pity, and helped her across the deck.

The three men gathered about her at the rail.

"Before we go any farther," said the agent, in a conversational tone, "will you men walk into Cap'n Fargo's house with me and sit down while we talk this over a little? If you

say you will, I'm willing to take your word. But if not, I have men on the pier and on the bank that might help you to make up your minds."

"That's not necessary. We'll go with you. Just a step up, Annie. Put your hand on my shoulder."

"All right, Mister Smiley. Come, Harper." In passing his assistant, Beveridge paused to whisper: "I'll be at the house. See that McGlory doesn't try to get ashore. If he gives you any trouble, whistle."

A few moments more, and they were seated around Mrs. Fargo's dining table, Beveridge, Dick, Pink Harper, and the old fisherman. Annie was shut in her room, refusing admittance even to her mother.

"There's one question that comes up right here, Mr. Smiley," began Beveridge, "before we go any farther. Is this man Harper one of your accomplices?"

"What do you mean by that?"

"Don't take my time by evasions. You have given me trouble enough now. If you will tell me he has had little or nothing to do with this business, and if he can give a good

account of himself, I'll let him go. What do you say?"

"Will you tell me what you mean?"

"That's enough. I won't waste any more time on it. We'll hold him. Cap'n," turning to Fargo, "there's one thing — I guess you can understand my position — I shall have to call on Annie for a witness, a little later."

Here Dick broke out. "So that's why you dragged her into this, is it?"

"Be careful what you say, Mr. Smiley."

Dick looked hard at him, then glanced around the group, then settled back in his chair. After a short silence, Captain Fargo spoke.

"This isn't all settled, is it, Mr. Beveridge? Dick hasn't told you that what you thought was so?"

"It was hardly necessary. I found the proofs right there on his schooner."

"Is that right, Dick?"

"It seems to be."

"You don't mean to say right out that you're a smuggler, Dick?"

"No, I'm not."

Captain Fargo was puzzled. He looked from one to the other of the two men, until Beveridge, with an air of settling the matter, rose. "You'd better not throw away any sympathy there, Cap'n. You can be thankful to find out in time that he's a bad one. I'm only sorry to have to draw your family into it. I tried hard enough not to."

"Yes, I know that."

There was a shout outside, a noise on the steps, and a hammering on the door. Then before the fisherman could get out of his chair, the outer door burst open, and down the hall and into the dining room came Wilson, breathless, his hat still on his head.

"Well, Bert —"

"He's skipped!"

"McGlory? What were you thinking of? Where'd he go?" Beveridge was on his feet.

"No use, Bill; sit down. It'll take a steamer to catch him."

"You didn't stand there and let him sail off."

"Wait'll I tell you. I was back a little way, where the pier narrows, so's he couldn't slip by through the lumber. The schooner he was on, the — the —"

"*Schmidt*," put in Pink.

"The *Schmidt* was on the south side, the — the —"

"*Merry Anne*," said Pink.

"— was on the north. There's a south wind, you see. And the first thing I knew I heard the tackle creaking off to the left. Thinks I, that's from the *Merry Anne*, only there ain't a soul aboard her. I ran out and looked, and sure enough, there she was, with two or three men hauling away on the sails."

"And you didn't stop 'em?"

"How could I, Bill? You see, they'd cut the ropes and let her drift off down the wind. She was a hundred feet out before they made a move."

"But what were they doing on the *Merry Anne?*"

"Don't you see?" said Pink; "she can beat the old *Schmidt* hands down."

"They'd sneaked across out by the end," added Wilson, "while I was nearer shore."

Beveridge sat down again, and tapped the table nervously as his eyes shifted from one to another of the faces before him. "How're they sailing, Bert?"

"Right off north."

"Before the wind?"

"Yes, sure," said Pink; "how could they help it with a south wind?"

"Smiley," — Beveridge had turned on Dick, and was speaking in a keen, hard voice, — "where are they going?"

"I couldn't tell you."

"Think a little. Your memory's poor, maybe."

But Dick was stubborn. Pink, however, was struck by a flash of intelligence. "I'll bet I know."

"Where, Harper?"

"Why, to Spencer's, where we just come from."

"Where's that?"

"Around in Lake Huron. If I had a chart here — Cap'n, ain't you got a chart o' Lake Huron?"

Except for Pink's eager voice, the room was still. The four other men sat like statues, leaning forward. As he waited for the reply, the boy became suddenly conscious of the odd expression of their faces. He had meant to help both Dick and himself — was he helping?

The thought that had already found a place in Dick's mind, the thought that they were in the hands of a merciless agent, whose whole object was to prove them guilty, whose own advantage, whose future perhaps, lay in proving them guilty — and that the course to be followed was not a matter for offhand decision, came now to him, and he faltered.

Captain Fargo shook his head. "No," said he, huskily, "not even of Lake Michigan."

"Go on, Harper. Perhaps you can tell us. Your memory's better than Smiley's."

When Beveridge spoke that last sentence, he made a mistake. Pink glanced at Dick, and dropped his eyes. When he raised them, his lips were closed tight, as if he were afraid to open them at all.

"Well, go on."

Pink shook his head.

"Don't be a fool, Harper. If you can help me get McGlory, it may make it easier for you."

"But him —" Pink motioned toward Dick — "would it make it easier for him?"

Beveridge shook his head. "I don't believe the Lord a'mighty could save him."

"Then," said Pink, with a flash of anger, "you can go to hell for all o' me!"

Beveridge sat thinking. He looked at Dick from under his eyebrows, studying the man with shrewd eyes. With the same scrutiny, he looked at Pink. Then he drew an envelope from his pocket and consulted a list that had been jotted on the back; and followed this with a Milwaukee time-table, which he studied with eye and finger. "It's now —" he looked at his watch — "nine-twelve. We'll make the nine-forty. Come along with me, Smiley."

Captain Fargo asked the question that Dick would not ask. "What are you going to do with the boys, Mr. Beveridge?"

"We're going to Milwaukee now, on the nine-forty."

"To Milwaukee!"

"Yes. I'm afraid that's all I can tell you."

Dick and Pink took their hats and rose. Wilson stepped back to fall in at Pink's shoulder, leaving Smiley to his superior. Suddenly Captain Fargo, after a moment of puzzled silence, broke out with, "Wait — has anybody seen or heard of Henry?"

All looked blank.

"Where was he seen last?" asked the Special Agent.

"He was here on the beach after supper. We had a little chat together. He'd been uptown after some tobacco, and said he was going right out to the *Schmidt*, and would be spending the night there."

"He hasn't been around since?"

"No — not here."

"You haven't seen him?" This was addressed to Pink. Beveridge wheeled suddenly on him in asking it, and raised his voice with the idea of bullying him into a reply. But Pink shook his head.

"They wouldn't likely have lugged him across the pier with them. He may be on the *Schmidt* yet. How about it, Bert?"

"I don't think so. I looked around the cabin. Shall I look again?"

"Yes. We'll wait here. You'll have to hurry with it. We can't stay here more than ten minutes longer."

Wilson was out of the room at a bound, down the steps and across the beach and running out on the long pier. In five minutes he was back.

"Well —"

"Not a soul there."

"How many men did he have aboard? Do you know, Cap'n?"

"Only one or two, I guess, besides McGlory."

"They've gone along, of course. The only question is, did they take him with 'em?"

"How could they?" said Wilson. "He is a strong man, and there wasn't any sound of a scuffle. No, if there had been anything like that, I should have heard it."

"I'll tell you what I think," said Fargo. "It isn't what I think, either; but it keeps coming up in my mind. He didn't seem quite himself when he was talking to me."

"How — nervous?"

"Oh, no, but kind of depressed. He never says a lot, but then he isn't generally blue like he certainly was to-night. He talked about McGlory, too."

"What did he say about him?" asked Beveridge sharply.

"He said that McGlory and Dick had disagreed, and Dick had ordered him off his schooner, and he had taken him in for the

night. McGlory, he said, was so ugly there was no getting on with him. He had sort of made an errand up-town so he could get away and cool down a little. I guess he felt so glum himself he was afraid to trust himself with a man that acted like McGlory was acting."

Beveridge was standing by the door, ready to start, watching the Captain closely during this speech. Now a look of intelligence came to his face. "How are Henry Smiley's affairs — money and that sort of thing?" he asked.

"Oh, all right, I think. He has always been saving. He must have a neat little pile tucked away by this time."

"And he wasn't married, or —" Beveridge paused.

"Not Henry. No, he was a woman-hater, pretty nearly."

"Was he pessimistic — kind of down on things? Did he have any particular object in living — anything to work for specially?"

"He was pessimistic, all right. Didn't believe in much of anything. I — I know what you're thinking, Mr. Beveridge, but I — I can't hardly think it's possible. I don't know, though, I guess his schooner was about the

only thing he cared for, except maybe Dick here."

"Oh, fond of his cousin, was he?"

"Yes, I think you could say he was that."

"Had you dropped him any hint of what I told you?"

"Well, now you speak of it, I don't know but what maybe I did let him see that I was a little worried about Dick."

Beveridge nodded. "I can't wait any longer. Come, Bert. You, I suppose," turning to Dick and Pink, "will come along without any trouble?"

"Certainly," said Dick.

"Good-by, Captain — and say, by the way, Captain, if I were you, I would send right up to the life-saving station and have them set a few men to dragging out there."

"Do you really believe that — "

Beveridge nodded. "If he is found anywhere, it will be within fifty feet of the pier. Good-by. Come, Bert."

They hurried over to the railway station, Beveridge walking with Dick, Wilson with Harper. In the minute or two that they had to wait, Beveridge scrawled the following

message, and had it put promptly on the wire: —

"To CAPTAIN B. SULLIVAN, on board U.S. Revenue Cutter *Foote*, Milwaukee.

"Am coming Milwaukee with two of our men. Third has stolen schooner and headed Lake Huron. Will be aboard for chase about midnight. Kindly have all ready.

"WM. BEVERIDGE.

"*To Operator:* — If not there, try Sheboygan, Manitowoc, Sturgeon Bay, and Marinette, — in order named. BEVERIDGE.

"RUSH!"

CHAPTER IX

THE CHASE BEGINS — THURSDAY MORNING

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THE four men were in the smoking-car, spinning along toward Milwaukee. Beveridge handed Dick a cigar. Then, after a little: —

"Say, Smiley, I'm doing a rather odd thing with you."

"Are you?"

"Yes — in taking you off here instead of having you locked right up in Chicago."

Dick waited.

"You see, I have thought this business over pretty carefully; I have thought *you* over pretty carefully — and I like you. Now I have been some time on this case, and I understand it, I think. I understand you, and McGlory, and Stenzenberger, and the lot of you. But there is one place where I'm still weak, — that is Spencer and his places up there

in Lake Huron. That is the only thing we haven't run down. I could get it of course in time, but it *would* take time, and that's just what I don't want to take now. I'm depending on you to set me right. Of course it's your privilege, if you want, to shut your mouth up tight. But I don't take you for that sort of a chap. I have a way of my own of going at these things. There are some of our men would bully you, but that isn't my way — not with you. I'll tell you right here, that any help you can give me will be a mighty good thing for you in the long run."

"What do you expect me to tell you?"

"You will know at the proper time. All I want to find out now is whether you are going to stand by me and help me through with it or not."

"Why, I will do what I can."

"What does that mean exactly?"

"I will tell you all I know."

"All right, sir. Now we understand each other. And I'll do what I can to make it easy for you."

"There's one thing—"

"What is it?"

"What are you going to do with us in Milwaukee?"

"If we have to stop over night, why, we'll go to a hotel."

"Not the jail, eh?"

"No," — Beveridge gave his prisoner a keen glance, then shook his head, — "no, that won't be necessary."

The *Foote* was not at Milwaukee; apparently she was not at Sheboygan, Manitowoc, Sturgeon Bay, or Marinette. Throughout the night, while Dick and Harper were shut up with Wilson on the top floor of the hotel, Beveridge haunted the telegraph office downstairs. Simultaneous messages went out to Cedar River, Green Bay, Two Rivers, Kewaunee,— to every little town along the west shore, even back to Kenosha, Racine, and Waukegan. Then Beveridge thought of the east shore, and tried all the ports from Harbor Springs down to St. Joseph, but with no success. He dropped on the lounge in the hotel office for a cat nap now and then. And finally, at half-past five in the morning, he was called to the telephone and informed that the *Foote* had just been sighted heading in toward the breakwater.

Promptly he aroused his prisoners, who obligingly tumbled into their clothes; and the party drove down to the river and boarded a tug. A little time was to be saved by meeting the revenue cutter before she could get in between the piers. So out they went, past silent wharves and sleepy bridge keepers, out into the gold of the sunrise.

There was the *Foote* nearly in, her old-fashioned engine coughing hard, her side wheels beating the water to a foam, making her very best speed of nine miles an hour. She caught the signal from the tug, stopped, backed, and let down her companion ladder. Captain Sullivan, a grizzled veteran, bearing evidences of hasty dressing, was at the rail to meet them.

"Well," said Beveridge, "I'm mighty glad to see you, Captain. I didn't know whether you were on earth or not."

"I got your message at Sturgeon Bay, and came right down."

"Did you answer?"

"Of course," somewhat testily. "You gave me no Milwaukee address. I sent it to Lakeville."

"That so? They should have forwarded it. They must have gone to sleep down there."

"I know nothing about that. All clear down there? All right, Mr. Ericsen!"

The tug backed away, the paddle-wheels revolved again, and the old steamer swung around in a wide circle.

"You haven't told me where you want to go, Mr. Beveridge." Captain Sullivan was taking in Smiley and Harper with an eye that knew no compromise.

"We'll do that now, Cap'n. Mr. Smiley here is going to help us out a little if you will show us your chart of Lake Huron."

"*He* is!" was the Captain's reply. Then he turned abruptly and led the way up to the chart room.

The chart was spread out, and the three men bent over it.

"Now, Mr. Smiley," said Beveridge, "can you put your finger on Spencer's place?"

Dick did so.

"There's a harbor there, you say?"

"What's that nonsense," broke in Captain Sullivan, "a harbor behind False Middle Island?"

"Yes," Dick replied, "a good one."

"You'd better tell that to the Hydrographic Office."

"I don't need to tell it to anybody. I've been in there with my schooner."

"When was that, young man?"

"This month."

The Captain turned away with a shrug, and joined his lieutenant on the bridge. "We'll make for False Middle Island, Mr. Ericsen, just beyond Seventy Mile Point."

"Very well, sir."

Deliberately, very deliberately, the *Foote* coughed and rumbled northward, and Milwaukee fell away astern. She could not hope to catch the *Merry Anne* if the southerly breeze should hold. The schooner was running light, and even though she might have made but eighty or ninety miles during the night, she was by this time more than abreast of Milwaukee, and on the east side of the Lake, where she had the advantage in the run for the Straits of Mackinac.

"Do you think," asked Beveridge, when the Captain had gone to the bridge, "that we can overhaul her in the Straits?"

Dick shook his head. "Hardly. She has had a pretty steady breeze all night."

"But it isn't very strong."

"It doesn't need to be. There is nothing she likes better than running before just such a breeze. And when the sun is well up, it will blow harder."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes."

"This here is sort of an old tub, too."

Dick sniffed. "You have to watch the bubbles to see which way she's going."

Beveridge studied the chart. "See here," he said, "where's the Canadian hangout?"

Dick laid his finger on the indentation that represented Burnt Cove.

"Beyond the — what's this — Duck Island?"

"Just beyond the Duck Islands."

"Which place do you think he will make for?"

"Well — I can only tell you what I think."

"Go ahead."

"What McGlory will do will be to head for Spencer and take off the old man."

"And then run over to Burnt Cove?"

"That's what I think. Burnt Cove is in Canada, you see."

"Yes, I see it is. The boundary line runs down west and south of Manitoulin Island."

"If you want to stop him very bad, you'd better have Captain Sullivan go over to the boundary, close to Outer Duck Island, and then head for Spencer. In that way we shall be approaching Spencer along the line that McGlory must take if he tries to make the cove; and if it is not night, we ought to stand a good chance of sighting him. I figure that we ought to get up there just about in time."

"Of course, he doesn't know that we're so hot on his trail," mused Beveridge.

Dick sniffed again. "If you call this hot."

The Captain returned from the bridge, and Beveridge repeated Dick's suggestion.

"How are we to know this schooner?"

"She's sky-blue with a white line."

"Is she fast?"

"She don't need paddle-wheels to beat this."

This remark did not please Captain Sullivan. He turned away.

"I don't know how you feel, Smiley," said

Beveridge, "but I didn't get much sleep last night. Did you?"

"Precious little."

Within a few moments, while the colors of the dawn were fading, while the *Foote* was pounding heavily along northwest by north, the special agents and their two prisoners were sleeping like children.

At two o'clock Thursday morning the *Foote* lay, with motionless engines and lights extinguished, to the southward of Jennie Graham Shoal, near Outer Duck Island. Smiley and Harper, with Wilson close at hand, stood leaning on the rail, watching a launch that the crew were lowering to the water.

"Well," said Dick, in a low voice, "it looks as if we might get them."

"Shouldn't wonder," Wilson replied. He, too, was subdued by the strain.

"Pretty dark, though."

"That isn't all on their side."

"No, perhaps it isn't. Going to put out both launches, eh?"

"It looks that way."

Cautiously and swiftly the sailors worked. One launch, and then the other, was lowered into the water.

"Pretty neat, ain't it?" whispered Pink. "Why, with this wind they've got to run in right by one or other of the boats to get to Burnt Cove. Would they let us sail the *Anne* around, think, if they get her back?"

Dick shook his head.

Farther aft Beveridge was talking to Captain Sullivan. "It's the only thing to do, Captain. With him along, we can't miss her."

"I've nothing more to say. I don't like it; but he's your man."

"One thing more, Captain. It won't hardly be necessary to send an officer with me."

"But—"

"You see Wilson and myself, and about four husky sailors, a couple of 'em to run the launch, will be enough. Why not just leave it that way? You might tell your men they're to take my orders."

His meaning was obvious to the Captain; but he hesitated. This man Beveridge was young and bumptious. Irregular things had sometimes to be done, but it were best that they should be done by a seasoned officer. Still, it was Beveridge's case. They walked together toward the prisoners.

"Smiley," said Beveridge, "I'm going to take you along. I guess there isn't much doubt you could tell your schooner in the dark?"

"Tell her in the dark!" exclaimed Pink. "Why, he knows the squeak of every block!"

So Dick went. The Captain added a fifth sailor for safety, and took time to give him a few quiet instructions before he joined the launch. Then they pushed off and slipped away into the night. For four hours after that, the only sound heard aboard the *Foote*, where Pink, sleepless, hung over the rail, guarded by a deep-chested sailor, was the occasional puff-puff of one of the launches as it changed its post. A dozen pairs of eyes were searching the dark, looking for any craft that might be coming from Michigan.

As Captain Sullivan suspected, Beveridge's launch was over the Canadian boundary half an hour after she lost sight of the ship. Then Beveridge drew Dick back near the boiler. "Tell me this, Smiley. Do you think those fellows could possibly have got through before now?"

"I haven't much doubt of it."

"What makes you think so?"

"Because of the wind. It has never let down a minute since they started. If they lost no time at Spencer's, they could have done it easily."

"That's what I thought. Will you take the wheel and pilot us into Burnt Cove?"

"Sure, if you want me to."

Dick took the wheel. The fifth sailor spoke up. "You can't do that, sir."

"Can't do what?" said Beveridge.

"Take the wheel, sir. Powers is to keep the wheel. That's the orders."

"There's nobody but me giving orders here."

"Sorry, sir; but Powers has got to keep the wheel."

"We won't have any talk about this, young man. I'm a special agent of the United States Treasury Department, and I'm running this business. Powers can sit down."

The sailor's orders evidently did not warrant him to resist further.

Dick looked about for his bearings. Dimly he could make out the islands to the left. "What does she draw?" he asked.

"Two feet."

With only two feet of draft he could take chances. He was directly on the course that the *Merry Anne* had taken in leaving the cove, and he felt as certain, with the compass before him, as if he had made the trip by night a hundred times. There was very little sea, and the launch made good progress. "You might tell the engineer to crowd her all he can," he said to Beveridge. "It's quite a run."

Once Dick glanced back; and he winced. There sat Wilson, on his left hand and not a yard away, with a rifle across his knees. At this moment Beveridge returned from a whispered consultation with the engineer, and scowled at his assistant. "That isn't necessary, Bert," said he. "Put it up."

The overzealous young man laid the rifle on the seat behind him; and Beveridge, after a moment of hard thinking, his eyes fixed on Dick's muscular back, came up beside the wheel and leaned on the coamings. Dick's gaze left the compass only for the darkness ahead, where the outline of something that he knew to be a coast line was, to his trained eye, taking shape.

"Say, Smiley," — the special agent's voice was lowered; his tone was friendly, — "don't let that bother you. Nobody is holding a gun on you here. That isn't my way — with you."

Dick's eyes were fixed painfully on the compass.

"I just want you to know that it was a mistake. These guns aren't for you."

Beveridge, having said enough, was now silent. Apparently too boyish for his work, often careless in his talk, he was handling Smiley right, and so well did he know it that he was willing to lounge there at his prisoner's elbow and watch the course in silence. If Beveridge was ambitious, greedy for success and promotion, frequently unscrupulous as to the means to be employed, — as now, when he was deliberately going into English territory, an almost unheard-of and certainly unlawful performance, — hard, even merciless, so long as he regarded only his "case"; he was also impulsive and sometimes warm hearted when appealed to on the personal side. He had, before now, gone intuitively to the heart of problems that stronger minds than his, relying on reasoning alone, had been unable to solve.

Much as a bank teller detects instantly a counterfeit bill or coin, he picked his man. He was quick to feel the difference between a right-minded man who has fallen into wrong ways and the really wrong-minded man. His course to-night was a triumph. He had given his prisoner the means to lead his little party to destruction, but he knew perfectly that nothing of the sort would be done. More, the only man aboard who could prove in court that he had gone over that vague thing, the boundary line, was this same prisoner, who should, by all sensible thinking, be the last man to trust with such information; and yet he felt perfectly comfortable as he leaned out a little way and watched the foam slipping away from the bow.

The launch went on toward the increasing shadows, plunged through the surf, and glided into the cove.

"See anything?" whispered Beveridge.

"Not a thing," Smiley replied.

"She isn't here, eh?"

"No, neither of them."

"Neither of what?"

"Neither the *Anne* nor the *Estelle*, Spencer's schooner. Shall we go back outside?"

"Yes."

"You speak to the engineer, then. This bell makes too much noise."

They backed cautiously around and returned through the surf to deep water.

"Lie up a little way off the shore here," said Beveridge; "we'll cut them off if they try to get in."

For a moment nothing was said; then this from Smiley, "Do you mind my saying a word?"

"No. What?"

"It has just struck me — we are wasting time here."

"You think so?"

"I know so."

"Why?"

"It stands to reason that McGlory would expect to be chased, don't it?"

"Of course."

"Well, then, he is not going to put right over here after he has taken off old Spencer, is he? It's almost like running back on his course — amounts to the same thing."

"But he is likely to come here, isn't he?"

"I should think so."

"Well," impatiently, "how else could he do it?"

"Easily enough. He could go right on east from Spencer's place and make for Owen Channel, up near the head of Georgian Bay. That's at the other end of this island."

"Manitoulin Island? Is it as big as that?"

"Yes, it lies all across this end of Lake Huron. If he went through Owen Channel, he could get around into the North Channel, and then down into Bayfield Sound and Lake Wolsey. Bayfield Sound, you see, pretty nearly cuts the island in halves. It is right opposite here, only a few miles overland. That would be a long way around, but it is the safe way. You see, I've been thinking —"

"Well — what?"

"Why, he would be likely to think just like I did, that when you had got up here you wouldn't be able to resist coming on across the line."

"You seem to know these routes pretty well for a man who has been to Spencer's only once."

"I saw it on the chart the other day. A man couldn't help figuring that out."

"What would you suggest doing?"

"Putting for Spencer's, just as tight as your old stationary wash-tub can make it."

"But hold on, now. If you think they have got away from there long ago—"

"I *think* that, but I'm not sure. Supposing they have—then you've lost them anyhow. Don't you see? But suppose there was a delay in getting away there,—it's more than likely McGlory and Spencer wouldn't agree. McGlory isn't the agreeing kind, and I don't think Spencer is either. It will be daylight before so very long, and with this wind they can't get here, if they're coming here at all, without our sighting them on the way over. And there is just a fighting chance of catching them there before they make for Georgian Bay, or some other place we don't know of."

Beveridge thought a moment. "There is something in that. We'll do it."

At mid-morning the *Foote* stopped her engines abreast of False Middle Island, and Captain Sullivan sent for Beveridge.

"You tell me there is a harbor in there?"

"That's what I understand. But it won't be necessary to take the steamer in."

The Captain's expression showed that he had not the slightest notion of taking her in.

"I think," Beveridge went on, "that you had better put me ashore with a few men in there north of the island. I'll go around behind the sand-dunes and come on the place from the woods. Then if they should be there, and if they should try to run out, you can stop them. I'll have Smiley guide me."

"You're going to take him ashore with you?"

"That's what I'm going to do."

"I don't believe in this!"

Beveridge said nothing.

"Oh, very well. I'll have a boat ready."

Smiley was called, and Beveridge drew him aside and outlined his plan. Shortly Wilson joined them, and a half-dozen sailors were picked from the crew. Then, all but Smiley armed with rifles and revolvers, they descended to the small boat and were brought rapidly to the shore.

"Which way?" asked Beveridge, sticking close at Smiley's elbow.

"I'll show you; come along." He led the way back among the pines and made a circuit,

bringing up squarely on the landward side of the settlement.

"Where is it now, Smiley?"

"Right there."

Beveridge peered out through the trees, then beckoned his men together. "Come in close, boys, and pick your trees. Keep out of sight — and quiet. Take my rifle, one of you."

"Shall we go in?" asked Wilson.

"You stay here, Bert."

"Hadn't you better take your rifle?"

"No, I don't want it. Quiet now."

The men spread out, taking places where they could command the outbuildings.

"Smiley?"

"Yes."

"Which is Spencer's house — where he lives himself?"

"The biggest one. You can see the roof over that shed there."

"All right. Much obliged."

Beveridge walked rapidly out into the clearing and disappeared around the shed. They heard him mount Spencer's front steps and knock.

"He's plucky enough," muttered Dick.

"Oh, don't you worry about Bill Beveridge," said Wilson. "Why, I've seen him —"

But Beveridge was calling for them to join him.

"Nobody here?" asked Wilson.

"Not a soul. I took a look around the house. They left in a hurry. See there."

He nodded toward the harbor. There lay the *Merry Anne* at the wharf. The smaller schooner was not to be seen.

"Too late, eh?" said Wilson.

"Too late."

"Suppose they've gone overland?"

"Not a bit of it. They left Smiley's schooner here and went off in Spencer's."

"Oh, he had one too?"

"Certainly he did."

Dick had made headlong for the schooner. Now they saw him standing on the after deck-house, reading a paper which he had found nailed to the mast.

"What have you there?" called Beveridge.

"Come and see."

The special agent joined him and took the paper. "It's hard enough to read. Whoever wrote this was in a big hurry. What's this?

'Left again. You'd better foot it home. Whiskey Jim.' Whiskey Jim, eh? He's stealing your thunder, Smiley."

"Will you let me see it again?" said Dick. He sat down on the edge of the deck-house and read it over, gazing at it with fascinated eyes. The other men watched him curiously.

CHAPTER X

THURSDAY NIGHT — THE GINGHAM DRESS

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"WELL," said Wilson, "what do you think?"

"We'll do our thinking later. Take these men and search the place. Smiley and I will wait here."

"You don't expect them to find anything, do you?" asked Dick, when the others had gone.

"Can't say. We've lost the men, but we may get some evidence."

"Where do you think they are?"

"Where could they be but in Canada?"

Dick was silent.

"Say, Smiley, I like the way you're acting in this business. If anything on earth will make it any brighter for you, it is what you are doing now. You might even go a step farther if you should feel like it any time. It's plain

that McGlory and Spencer are pretty deep in, and if you would come out and tell all you know, it might help you a lot."

"I have told all I know."

"Oh, of course, — that's just as you like."

They were silent again for a few moments. Then Dick spoke up. "You feel pretty sure about their being in Canada, don't you?"

"Have you thought of anything else?"

"Yes. Where is the other revenue cutter now?"

"The *Porter?* At Buffalo, I think, — or Cleveland, or Detroit."

"And she's about twice as fast as the *Foote*, isn't she?"

"Just about."

"Well, now, supposing they weren't sure but what she would be sent up here too? It was as likely as not."

"It should have been done."

"Then wouldn't they have been fools to have put right out again to cross the Lake — with one steamer coming down on 'em through the Straits and another coming up from Detroit?"

"Fools or not, they did it. We know that much."

"Do we?"

"*Don't* we!"

"I don't see it."

"Don't you see what they've done? They have left your schooner here and gone off in Spencer's."

"Who has?"

"Look here, Smiley, you are on the wrong side of this case. You ought to be working for the government."

"I may be before I get through with it. You see what I'm driving at, don't you?"

"About yourself?"

"Hang myself. About Spencer."

"And McGlory?"

"No, not McGlory. Just Spencer."

"Why not McGlory?"

"Just this —"

Wilson approached. "There's nobody here, Bill."

"Wait over there a minute, Bert, with the boys. Go on, Smiley."

"McGlory is a sailor; Spencer isn't. McGlory would feel safer on a boat; Spencer

knows these woods like a book. Do you follow?"

"Go on."

"Now, I'm just as sure as that I'm sitting here, that when it came to a crisis like this, those two would disagree."

"And you ought to know them."

"I know McGlory. He isn't the kind that takes orders from anybody, drunk or sober. And from the look I had at old Spencer, I don't think he is either. He looked to me like a cool hand. Quiet, you know, with a sort of cold eye. It doesn't sound like Spencer to put out into the Lake with revenue cutters closing in all around him."

"But does it sound like McGlory?"

"Exactly. He's bull headed."

"Then you think the other schooner *was* here?"

"More than likely."

"And McGlory took it and Spencer didn't?"

"That's getting near it."

"And who wrote that note?"

"I don't know. I never saw Spencer's writing, and McGlory's only once or twice. It's written rough, but it looks familiar, somehow."

"McGlory's work then, likely?"

"Maybe."

"But what object would Spencer have in staying behind? Where could he go?"

"He could get out of Michigan and down to Mexico without one chance in a hundred of being caught — not unless you had men on every train in the United States."

"You mean he would make for a railway?"

"Yes."

"But he would have to go to Alpena to do it."

"Not a bit. He needn't go anywhere near the coast. There's a town called Hewittson, on the Central Road, about fifty miles back in the woods, southwest of here. It's the terminal of a branch line, and it's the nearest point."

"Even then he would have to go through Detroit or Michigan City, where we *have* men."

"No, he wouldn't. He could get over to the Grand Rapids and Indiana with a few changes and without passing through a single big town. When he once got down there in Indiana, you would have a pretty vigorous time catching him."

Beveridge mused. "This is all very inter-

esting, Smiley, but it is hardly enough to act on."

"Isn't it, though? What earthly good could you do on the water that Captain Sullivan couldn't do just as well without you? There he is with his men, and he ought to do what you tell him."

"I don't know about that," said Beveridge, with a smile.

"Anyhow," Dick went on eagerly, "the old *Foote* isn't going to make any more miles an hour for having you on board."

"There's something in that. You seem to be keen on this business."

"Keen! Good Lord, man! don't you see the position I'm in? Don't you see that my only chance is to help you run this down and get at the facts? Honest, I don't see what you could lose by taking a flier overland to Hewittson. It's just one more chance opened up for you, and you ought to take it."

"How did you happen to know so much about these railroads up here?"

"You didn't suppose I had my eyes shut when I was looking at that chart the other day, did you?"

"It seems to me you took in a lot in a thundering short time."

"Of course I did. It is my business to take in a lot when I look at a chart."

"Well, this is interesting, Smiley. I'll think it over. Come on, boys."

The sailors rowed them back to the steamer; and the special agent was promptly closeted with Captain Sullivan. He laid out the whole situation, suggesting that the Captain keep a close watch on the Burnt Cove region and that he leave a launch at Spencer's. The fugitives had left nearly all they had, even to clothing, behind, and it was conceivable that they might return.

"I wish," he added, as he rose to go, "that I could call on the county authorities. Wilson and I may have our hands full if we meet them."

"You think you'd better not?"

"Hardly. It is even chances that they are mixed up in the business some way. Spencer has known them longer than we have."

He left the Captain's stateroom, and found Smiley waiting for him by the wheel-house.

"There's one thing I didn't say when we

were talking," began the prisoner, looking with some hesitation at the agent.

"What's that, Smiley? Speak up. I'm starting now."

"You're going to try it, then?"

"Yes."

"Will you take Pink and me with you?"

Beveridge straightened up and flashed a keen, inquiring glance through Dick's eyes, down to the bottom of his soul. Dick met it squarely.

"By Jove!" said Beveridge.

Not a word said Smiley.

"By Jove! I'll do it!"

Dick turned away, limp.

"Smiley!"

He turned back.

"Where's Harper?"

"Down below."

"Bring him to my stateroom. Be quick about it."

A very few moments more, and Dick and Harper knocked at the special agent's door.

"Come in."

They entered, and found Beveridge and Wilson together. Beveridge closed the door,

and there the four men stood, crowded together in the narrow space. Beveridge gave them another of his sharp glances, then he drew from his coat pockets two revolvers and held them out, one in each hand.

Dick and Pink looked speechless.

"Well, take 'em. You boys are to help me see this thing through, now."

"Do you — do you mean that?"

"I don't joke with pistols."

Without more words each reached out. Dick thrust his into his hip pocket; but Pink opened his and looked at the loaded cylinder.

"Now, boys," said Beveridge, "we're off."

Wilson descended first to the launch, and Dick was about to follow when Captain Sullivan hurried up and caught his arm. "Here, here! This won't do!"

Dick turned, and started to speak; then, seeing that Beveridge was approaching, he waited.

"That's all right, Captain," called the special agent; "let him go."

"Let him go!"

Beveridge drew the Captain aside.

"You aren't going to take him ashore with you?"

"Yes, both of 'em."

Anger was struggling with disgust in the Captain's face. "You'd better hand 'em revolvers and be done with it."

"I've done that already."

"Oh, you *have!*"

"Yes, sir. And I don't mind telling you that, guilty or not, there aren't two men I'd feel safer with in the Southern Peninsula."

"Oh, there *ain't!*" A feeble reply, but the old Captain was beyond words. "Very well," was all he could get out, "very well!"

With that they parted; and the boat, with the strangely selected party aboard, made for the shore.

"Now, Smiley," said Beveridge, when the boat had left them on the sand, "how about our direction?"

"Exactly southwest from here. I suppose we shall have to make for Hewittson in a straight line, and see if we can't get there first."

A sort of road led off in a southwesterly direction, and this they followed for an hour. Then it swung off to the left, and they

plunged into the forest, from now on to be guided only by the compass. The afternoon wore along. For two hours, three hours, four hours, they tramped through the forest, which now opened out into a vista of brown carpet and cool shade, now ran to a blackened jungle of stumps and undergrowth; but always underfoot was the sand, no longer white but yellow and of a dustlike quality. It gave under the foot at every step; it rose about them and got into their throats and finally into their tempers.

"Say, Smiley," called Wilson. He had swung his coat over his shoulder; his face was streaked with sweat and dirt; the spring was gone from his stride. "Say, Smiley, where are those streams you were talking about?"

"Give it up."

"This is a pretty place you're getting us into."

"Shut up, Bert!" said Beveridge. "You tend to business, and quit talking."

"Who's talking? Can't I ask a civil question?"

"From the sound, I guess you can't."

"You're saying a word too much there, Bill Beveridge!"

Beveridge stopped short and wheeled around. He had tied the sleeves of his coat through one suspender so that it hung about his knees and flapped when he walked. His waistcoat was open, his collar was melted to a rag; altogether he was nearly as tired and hot as his assistant.

"What do you say to sitting down a minute?" suggested Smiley, diplomatically.

But Wilson returned to the attack. "How long are you going to keep on this way, Bill?"

The obstinate quality in Wilson's voice roused a counter-obstinacy in Beveridge. He decided not to reply.

"Maybe the sand's getting into his ears so he can't hear well," said Wilson, addressing Harper as nearly as anybody. But Pink, rather than get into the controversy, went off a little way to a spruce tree and fell to cutting off a piece of the gum.

"It's just as you like, Bill," pursued Wilson. "Of course, it ain't any of my business, — but I just thought I'd tell you we

passed that big clump of pines over there about two hours and a half ago."

In spite of him, Beveridge's eyes sought the spot indicated.

"I don't care, you understand, Bill. I'll go where I'm ordered. But if you *will* go on trusting that compass of yours, don't you think maybe we'd better be thinking about saving up what sandwiches we've got left? These Michigan woods *ain't* a very cheerful spot to spend the fall, unless you've planned that way, you know, — brought tents and things, and maybe a little canned stuff."

"Oh, go to ——!" muttered Beveridge, without turning.

"What's that you said?" Wilson was on his feet.

Here Smiley broke in with the suggestion that they try marking trees.

And for an hour they were tearing their shirts to strips, and sighting forward from tree to tree; then the early twilight began to settle on the forest. They spoke of it no more, but pushed on feverishly under the leadership of Beveridge, whose spirits, which had reached low-water mark in the difference with Wilson,

were flowing again. From rapid walking they took to running; still the twilight deepened. Finally the uneven ground and the deep shadows led them into scratches and tumbles, and they were obliged to stop.

"Bill," said Wilson, "look over there."

"Where?"

"That tree — runs up six feet or so, and shoots off over the ground, and then turns square up again."

"Yes. What about it?" A queer sound was creeping into the special agent's voice.

"Don't you remember — about three o'clock — the tree we passed? Harper said it was exactly like a figure four, because of the broken part that stuck up above the branch, — and you said —"

"Well, but —"

"Just take a good look at it."

Beveridge stepped a little way forward and looked and looked.

"Well?"

Beveridge was silent. His eyes left the tree only to fix themselves on the ground.

"What do you think, Bill?"

Instead of replying, the special agent

turned abruptly and walked away through the brush. He soon disappeared, but his assistant could hear him thrashing along. In a few moments he returned, and without a word set about building a fire. They all lent a hand, and soon were sitting around the blaze, moody and silent.

"Say, boys," — it was Smiley speaking up, — "I have an idea. Let me take your compass a minute, Beveridge."

There was no reply. Smiley thought he had not been understood. "Let's have your compass, Beveridge."

Then the special agent looked up. "If you can find it, you're welcome to it," he said.

"Why, you haven't lost it?"

"If you've got to know, I've thrown it."

"The —— you have!"

A moment's silence. Somewhere off in the wilderness a twig crackled, and they all started. Harper's scalp tingled during the long stillness that followed the sound.

"What did you do that for?" asked Smiley.

"Because we're sitting at this moment within a hundred feet of where we sat at three o'clock this afternoon."

After this the silence grew unbearable. "I don't know how you fellows feel," said Wilson, "but I'm thirsty clear down to my toes. If there's any water around here, I'm going to find it." He drew a blazing pine knot from the fire and started off.

"Look out you don't set the woods afire," growled Beveridge.

For five minutes — long minutes — the three sat there and waited. Then they heard him approaching, and saw his light flickering between the trees. He came into the firelight, and paused, looking from one to another with a curious expression. It almost seemed that he was veiling a smile.

"Come this way," he finally said. And they got up and filed after him. He led them a short fifty yards, and paused. They stood on the edge of a clearing. A few rods away they saw a story-and-a-half farm-house, with a light in the kitchen window. Farther off loomed the outline of a large barn. They stumbled on, and found midway between the two buildings a well with a bucket worked by a crank and chain.

They could not speak; they looked at one

another and grinned foolishly. Then Beveridge reached for the crank, but Dick caught his arm.

"Hold on there, Bill," he said fervently, drawing a small flask from his hip pocket, "you wouldn't spoil a thirst like this with water?"

"You don't mean to say that you've had this in your clothes all along?" said Beveridge.

"Yes. I thought from the way things were going we might need it more to-morrow than to-day."

There was a general smacking of lips as the flask went around. Then they paused and looked at the house.

"Well," observed Beveridge, "I'm not sure that I want to be told where we are — but here goes!" And he walked slowly toward the kitchen door, sweeping his eyes about the farmyard and taking in all that could be seen in the darkness. At his knock there was a noise in the kitchen, — the sound of a chair scraping, — and the door was opened a very little way.

"How are you?" began the special agent.

The farmer, for it was he who blocked the doorway, merely looked suspiciously out.

"We're a camping party, Mr. — Mr. —"

"Lindquist's my name." His voice was thin and peevish, a fit voice for such a thin, small man.

"— Mr. Lindquist, and we seem to have lost our way. Can you take us in and give us a little something to eat?"

"Why, I don't know's I could. How many is there of you?"

"Four."

"You say you're campers?"

"That's what we are."

"Is your tent near by?"

"Blest if we know. If we did, we shouldn't be here."

It was plain to the three of them, standing back in the dark, that Beveridge, for reasons of his own, was moving very cautiously, and equally plain that the little man had some reason for being cautious too. It was hard to think that any honest farmer, living so lonely a life, would be so downright inhospitable.

"And you say you want something to eat?"

"Well, now," — there was no trace of impatience in the special agent's voice, — "that's just as you like. We don't want to impose on you; and of course we're more than willing to pay for what we get."

"Well, I dunno. I s'pose you might come in. Maybe we've got a little bread and milk."

The kitchen was not a large room. The floor was bare, as were the walls, saving a few county-fair advertisements in the form of colored lithographs. A thin, colorless, dull-eyed little woman was seated beside a pine table, sewing by the light of a kerosene lamp. The third member of the family, a boy of fourteen, did not appear until a moment later. When the sound of the opening door reached his ears, he was lying flat on his bed, chin propped on hands, feverishly boring through a small volume in a flashy paper binding.

Beveridge, as they all found seats, was taking in the farmer, noting his shifting eyes, and his clothes, which were nothing more than a suit of torn overalls.

"Diana," said Lindquist, "you might give these young men some bread and milk."

His wife laid aside her sewing without a word, and went to the pantry.

"Now," began Beveridge, "I suppose we ought to find out where we are."

"What's that?"

"Where are we, Mr. Lindquist? What's the nearest town?"

"The nearest town, you said?"

"Yes."

"Why, Ramsey, I guess, or —"

"Or — what?"

"Or — Spencer's place."

"That's what I was afraid of." Beveridge turned to his companions, adding, "You see, we've got back near the lake."

At the sound of strange voices, the boy came down the stairs and stood in a corner, gazing at the strangers, and holding his book behind him.

"How far off is the Lake, Mr. Lindquist?"

"How — what's that you say?"

"How far off is the Lake?"

"What Lake?"

"Lake Huron, of course."

"Lake Huron? — Oh, twenty, — twenty-two mile."

"That's another story!" exclaimed Wilson. But Beveridge, evidently fearing his assistant's tongue, gave him a look that quieted him. The faces of the four travellers all showed relief.

The bread and milk were ready now, and they fell to, joking and laughing as heartily as if their only care had been a camp outfit somewhere in the woods; but all the time the three were watching Beveridge, awaiting his next move. It came, finally, when the last crumb of bread had disappeared and the plates had been pushed back.

"Now, Mr. Lindquist," said Beveridge, "it's getting on pretty late in the evening, and we're tired. Can't you put us up for the night? Not in the house — I'd hardly ask that — but out in the barn, say?" As he spoke he laid a two-dollar bill on the table and pushed it over close to the farmer's hand.

"Well, I dunno." For a moment the bill lay there between their two hands, then Lindquist's nervous fingers slowly closed over it. "I suppose you could sleep out there."

"That's first-rate. We'll go right out if you don't mind. You needn't bother about

coming. Just let your boy there bring a lantern and show us where to go."

Lindquist did not take to this. "Axel," he said, "you go up to bed. Mind, now!" Then he lighted the lantern and led the way to the barn. When he had left them, tumbled about on the fragrant hay, Smiley spoke up. "Well, Beveridge, what next?"

"Didn't he lock the door just then?"

"Yes," said Harper, "I'm sure I heard it. I'll go and see."

Slowly he descended, and felt his way across the floor, returning with the report that the door was fast.

"Now, boys, I'll tell you," said Beveridge. "We'll take a little rest. It's all right as long as one of us is awake. Before the night's over we've got to get hold of that boy, but we won't make a disturbance yet."

"Oh," cried Dick, a flood of light breaking in on his understanding, "it's the boy you're after."

"Yes, it's the boy, of course. I've had to sit down a good many times in my life and thank the Lord for my luck, but this beats it all."

"Are you sure, though, that they went through here?"

"Am I sure? Could you look at the old man and ask me that? What I'd like to know is how far off they are just now."

"Lindquist doesn't look as if he'd tell."

"Oh, no; *he* won't tell."

"Would it do any good to make him?"

"Put on a little pressure, you mean?"

"Yes."

"I don't think so. He'd lie to me, and we wouldn't have any way of knowing the difference. The boy is our game."

"Why not get him now? We could break out of here easy enough."

"No, Smiley, you're a little off the track there. He must tell us on the sly. Don't you see, he's a good deal more afraid of his father than he is of us. If we aren't careful, we'll have him lying too."

"Have you thought of the old lady?"

"Yes, but I'm doubtful there. She is afraid of him too. It's more than likely that she was kept pretty much out of the way. Anyhow, her ideas would be confused."

"But sitting up here in the haymow

isn't going to bring us any nearer to the boy."

"Isn't it?"

"I don't see how."

"Did you notice the book he was reading?"

"No, what book? I didn't see any book."

"I guess maybe you were right, Smiley, about your eyes being trained for sea work. Now, I'll tell you what. This little rest may be the only one we're entitled to for a day or so, and I wish you fellows would curl right up and go to sleep. I'm going to stay awake for a while. Harper, over there, is the only sensible one in the lot. He's been asleep for ten minutes."

"No, he ain't," drawled a sleepy voice.

"I can't get comfortable," growled Wilson. "How is a man going to sleep with this hay sticking into your ears and tickling you?"

"Next time I take you out, Bert," said Beveridge, "I'll bring along a pneumatic mattress and a portable bath-tub and a Pullman nigger to carry your things."

"That's all right, Bill. Wait till you try it yourself. There are spiders in the hay, mill-

ions of 'em, — and if there's anything I hate, it's spiders."

"Here," said Harper, "take some o' my pillow. I ain't having no difficulty." He threw over a roll of cloth, which Wilson, after some feeling about, found.

"Hold on, Harper, this isn't your coat?"

"No, it's part of a bundle of rags I found here."

"What's that!" Beveridge exclaimed. "A bundle of rags?"

"Feels like part of an old dress," said Wilson.

"Give it here, Bert. I'll take what you've got too, Harper." With the cloth under his arm Beveridge found the ladder and made his way to the floor below. Then he lighted a match.

The others crawled to the edge of the mow and looked down into the cavernous, dimly lighted space.

"Look out you don't set us afire, Bill."

"Come down here, Smiley, and see what you make of this."

It was not necessary to summon Dick twice. He swung off, hung an instant by his hands,

dropped to the floor, and bent with the special agent over what seemed to be the waist and skirt of a gingham dress. The examination grew so interesting that Harper and Wilson came down the ladder and peered over Dick's shoulders.

"You see," said Beveridge, — "here, wait till I light another match. Take this box, Bert, will you, and keep the light going? You see, it isn't an old dress at all. It's rather new, in fact. Mrs. Lindquist would never have thrown it away — never in the world. Now what in the devil — what's that, Smiley?"

"I didn't say anything. I was just thinking —"

"Well — what?"

"I don't know that I could swear to it, but — you see, you can't tell the color very well in this light."

"Oh, it's blue, plain enough."

"You're sure?"

"Perfectly."

"Looks nearer green to me. But if it's blue, I've seen it before."

"Where?"

"The day I was at Spencer's. There was a

The discovery of the gingham dress.

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girl there, the old man's sister-in-law, and she wore this dress."

"Are you perfectly sure, Smiley?"

"Well — dresses aren't in my line, but — yes, I'm sure. I noticed it because her eyes were blue too — and there was this white figure in it. Her name is Estelle. She waited on table, and — "

"Go on — don't stop."

"Wait up," said Wilson. "If you've got it identified, I'm going to quit burning up these matches. There are only about half a dozen left."

"All right. Put it out." And they talked on in the dark, seated, Dick and Beveridge on the tongue of a hay-wagon, Wilson on an inverted bucket, Harper on the floor.

"Why, she waited on table; and then McGlory disappeared and I had to go after him, and I found him talking to her — "

"Hold on!" Beveridge broke in. "You say you found her and McGlory together?"

"Yes. I guess we're thinking of the same thing. From the way they both acted, I rather guess it's an understood thing. It wasn't as if he had met her there by chance, not a bit

of it. And I've been thinking since, it seems more than likely that she would go wherever he went."

"That's right!" Beveridge exclaimed. "I'm sure of it. I know a little something about it myself."

"You do?"

"Yes. This McGlory has left a wife behind him in Chicago."

"Madge, you mean?"

"Yes. The main reason he took up the offer to go out with you, Smiley, was so he could get up here and see this — what's her name? — Estelle."

"So there is more than a fighting chance that where she is you'll find him."

"Exactly."

"And that means that he has been here to-day."

"Right again."

"Then who sailed the schooner for Canada?"

Harper, leaning forward in the dark and straining to catch every syllable of the low-pitched conversation, here gave a low gasp of sheer excitement. There had been mo-

ments — hours, even — during the day when the object of this desperate chase had seemed a far-off, imaginary thing beside the real discomforts of the tramp through the pines. But now, in this sombre place, they were plunged into the mystery of the flight, and he had been the unwitting means of deepening the mystery.

"That sort of mixes us up, Beveridge," said Smiley.

"Never mind." Beveridge's voice was exultant. "We're hot on the trail now. This taking to the woods is about the neatest thing I ever did."

"You're right there, Bill," Wilson chimed in.

Until now Dick had supposed that the land chase had been entirely his own notion, but he said nothing.

"Look here, Bill," — it was Wilson breaking the silence, — "there isn't any use of our trying to sleep to-night. Let's break out and run this thing down."

"How are you going to know your way in the middle of the night?"

"Make 'em show us."

"Suppose you can't make them?"

"I know — you're still thinking about that boy. But we are no nearer him than we were an hour ago."

"Listen a minute!"

They sat motionless. There was no sound; nothing but the heavy stillness of the night.

Wilson whispered, "Think you heard something?"

"S-sh!"

A key turned softly in the lock. Then the door opened a little way, and against the sky they could see a head. Wilson drew his revolver. Beveridge heard the hammer click, and said quietly, "Don't be a fool, Bert. Put that thing back in your pocket."

"Are you's in there?" came a voice from the door.

"Yes. Come along."

The door opened wider to admit the owner of the voice, then closed. A moment later a lantern was lighted and held up before the grinning, excited face of the farmer's son.

"Come on, Alex. What do you want?"

The boy slowly approached until he stood before them; then he set the lantern on the floor, where it cast long shadows.

"What is it, my boy?"

Axel looked knowingly at them. "Say," he whispered, "I know what you's are. You're detectives."

"Oh, we are, are we? What makes you think that?"

"You're detectives. I know."

"Sit down, and talk it over. Do you smoke?"

"Can I smoke? Well, I should say I can. You just watch me." He accepted a cigar, his first, and lighted it. "Don't let on to Pa, will you? He'd give me—" Unable to call up a strong enough word, the boy concluded with a grin.

"That's all right. We know how it is ourselves. Your father has enough to worry him just about now, anyhow. Didn't he have but the one suit of clothes?"

"Well, there was his old everyday suit, but that got tore so bad Ma said she couldn't mend it, and there wasn't only his Sunday suit and his work clothes left."

"You don't mean that he had to fight with those fellows?"

"Oh, no,—that was a long time ago. Say, this cigar is the real thing."

"It ought to be good. It's a fifteen-cent-straight."

"*You* don't say so!"

"I'll tell you one thing, Alex."

"My name's Axel."

"I'll tell you one thing. Your father has made a bad mistake in allowing himself to get mixed up with these people. He is with the wrong crowd. I'm the only one that could help him out."

The boy began to be frightened. "Oh, he ain't mixed up in it!"

"He isn't?"

"No. He never seen 'em before."

"What does he want to act this way for, then?"

"Well, you see—"

"Now look here, my boy. The sooner we understand each other, the better. Your father has got himself into a dangerous situation. He can't deceive me. I know all about it. Does he think he could keep me in here any

longer than I want to stay by locking the door? I'm half minded to arrest him for this. He can't do that sort o' thing to me!"

Axel was downright frightened now. He held his cigar so long that it went out. Wilson struck a match, and lighted it for him.

"I suppose you would like me to believe that he was forced to give up his clothes?"

"Oh, he was! The fellow with the black hair —"

"McGlory?"

"Seems to me they called him Joe."

"That's the same man. Go on."

"Why, he pulled a gun, and marched Pa out here to the barn. Ma ran upstairs crying. And the lady, she was crying, too. And the dark fellow, he made the lady climb up where you was, on the hay —"

"Yes, I know," Beveridge interrupted, indicating the dress.

"And then he held the gun while Pa took off his Sunday suit that he'd put on because he thought they was going to be visitors, and he threw it up to the lady, and she put it on. One of the suspenders was busted, and she didn't know how it worked, and she cried, and

then Pa had to holler up how he'd fixed it with a string and you twisted the string around twice and then tied it. And then the dark fellow, he made me run in and get Pa his overhauls."

"So they changed clothes right here, eh?"

"Yes, and the lady cried, and when she'd got all dressed in Pa's clothes, why, she just said she wouldn't come down. And Joe, he said she would, or he'd know the reason why. Then the others laughed some—"

"*The others!*"

"Yes, and they—"

"Hold on! How many were there in this party?"

"Why, three or four, counting in the lady."

"Three or four! Don't you know?"

"Well, you see, I didn't think about counting 'em then. What was I saying?"

"You said the others laughed."

"Oh, yes. Not very much, you know,—just a little. Then the boss, he said—"

"What sort of a looking man was this boss?"

"I dunno."

"Didn't you see him?"

"Oh, well, I—"

"What was it he said this time?"

"Oh, — he said something to Joe about not getting excited. I guess he thought he was kind o' mean to the lady. Anyhow, she come down after a little and kind o' stood around behind things. She was frightened some, I guess. And then they all went off."

"Which way?"

"I dunno. They told us we hadn't better watch 'em, and so I thought maybe I wouldn't."

"Was that the last you saw of them?"

"Well — not quite."

"Not quite! What else?"

"Before they'd gone very far, the boss came back."

"Oh, he did?"

"And he told Pa he guessed Joe was a little excited, and they hadn't meant to be hard on him. And so he gave Pa a little money for his trouble."

"I thought you said your father wasn't mixed up with them."

"He ain't. Not a bit."

"But you say he took their money?"

"What else could he do? They ain't the sort o' men you'd want to argue with."

"There is something in that. But why did he try to lock us in here?"

"I dunno."

"Oh, you don't."

"No, but — I'll tell you. Pa's rattled."

"I shouldn't wonder."

"He come up to my room just after he'd been out here with you, and says if I ever said a word about it, it would land the whole family in state's prison. That ain't so, is it?"

"Well, I'm not prepared to say."

The cigar was out again. "Oh, say, now, it wasn't his fault. He didn't do nothing but what they made him do."

"Of course, the fact that he helped them under compulsion might be considered in a court of law, but I'm not prepared to say that it mightn't go hard with you all. I'll do what I can to get you out of it, but it's a bad scrape. What direction is Hewittson from here?"

"Off that way. There's a road 'most all the way."

"That's first-rate. I want you to go with us."

"When?"

"Now."

"Oh, Pa — he wouldn't let me —"

"But I tell you to come."

"Would it help us any in getting off?"

"I might be able to make it easier if you really give me valuable assistance."

"We'll have to get away pretty quiet."

"Very well." Beveridge was rolling up the blue dress into a small bundle. "All ready, Bert — Smiley?"

"All right here."

"Put out your light, Axel."

They stepped cautiously outside, and the boy locked the door behind them. "Hold on," he whispered; "don't go around that way. Pa ain't asleep, never in the world!"

"Which way shall we go?"

"Here — after me — through the cow-yard."

They slipped around behind the barn, made a short detour through the edge of the forest, and reached the road beyond the house.

"Does this road run both ways, Axel?" Beveridge asked.

"Yes, from Hewittson to Ramsey."

"Do you hear that, Smiley? We must

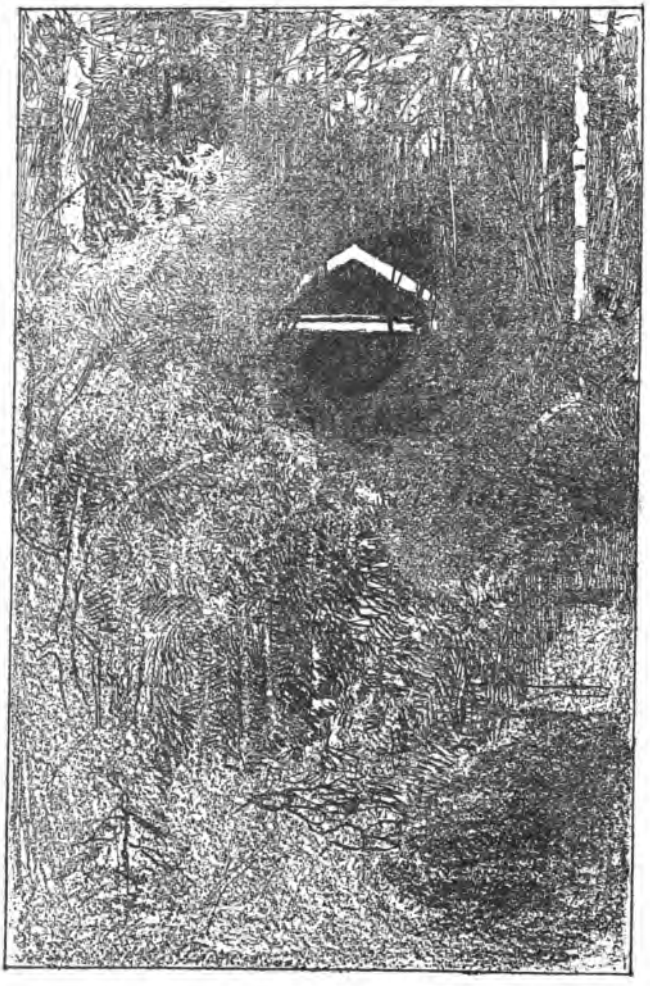
have been within a few hundred yards of it most of the way."

"Never mind, we'll make better time now, anyhow."

They pushed on, indeed, rapidly for half a mile, guided by the lantern, which Axel had relighted. Then the boy, overcome by the tobacco, had to be left, miserably sick, in a heap by the roadside. Beveridge snatched the lantern from his heedless fingers, thrust a bill into his pocket by way of payment, and the party pushed on.

CHAPTER XI

THURSDAY NIGHT — VAN DEELEN'S BRIDGE



CHAPTER XI

THURSDAY NIGHT — VAN DEELEN'S BRIDGE

THE stars were shining down on the stream that passed sluggishly under Van Deelen's bridge, but they found no answering twinkle there. A gloomy stream it was, winding a sort of way through the little farm, coming from — somewhere, off in the pines; going to — somewhere, off in the pines; brown by day, black by night; the only silent thing in the breathing, crackling forest. It seemed to come from the north, gliding out from under the green-black canopy with a little stumble of white foam, as if ashamed in the light of the clearing. Then, sullen as ever, it settled back, slipped under the bridge — where the road from Lindquist's swung sharply down — with never a swirl, and gave itself up to the pines and hemlocks that bent over. Behind the barn-yard it circled

westward, and paralleled the road for a few hundred yards, as if it, too, were bound for Hewittson; but changed its mind, turned sharply south, and was gone. Whither? The muskrats and minks perhaps could tell.

The clearing, in spite of the house and barn, was desolate; the pines were pressing irresistibly in on every side to claim the land Dirck van Deelen had stolen from them. The road, after crossing the bridge, lost itself in the confused tracks between house and barn, only to reappear on the farther side and plunge again into the forest, — a weary, yellow road, telling of miles of stump land as well as of the fresher forest.

It was late, very late, but there was a light in the house. A woman, in man's clothing, lay on the parlor sofa, too tired to rest. She was white; her breath came hard; her eyes were too bright. McGlory stood over her with a pair of scissors in his hand. He had cut off her long hair, and now it lay curling on the floor.

"Here, you," — he was speaking to Van Deelen, — "get a broom and take that up. Be quick about it. What are you gawking at?"

Van Deelen, slow of movement and slower of thought, obeyed.

"Now," said McGlory to the woman, "come along!" And he took her arm.

"Oh, no, Joe! I can't go! It will kill me!"

"Cut that — get up!"

Roche, who had been eating in the next room, came in, looked at them, and then hurried out, where the leader of the party awaited him.

"Aren't they 'most ready?"

"Yes — coming right along — if it don't kill her."

But when they heard a step and turned, only the woman appeared in the doorway.

"Where's Joe, Estelle?"

"He — he's coming." She staggered. Roche caught her, helped her down the steps, and with his arm about her waist led her out to the road. "He says to go along, and he'll catch us." She was plucky, or frightened, for she staggered along biting her lip.

This was what McGlory had said to Van Deelen after he had got her to the door: "Give me some paper and a pen — quick!"

They were promptly placed on the dining-room table; and he scrawled off a few lines, folded the paper, and looked up with a scowl. The strain of the week had not improved his expression. "Give me an envelope; I want you to mail this for me."

"I haven't got one."

"The —— you haven't!"

"Honest — that's the truth. I'd have to go to Hewittson, anyway. It'll be quicker for you to take —"

"Oh, shut up. I'm sick o' your voice. Here, take this." He thrust the letter into his pocket and counted out twenty-five dollars in bills. "This is for you. And mind, nothing said. You don't know us — never seen four men coming through here in the night. Don't remember *ever* having seen four men come through. Understand?"

Van Deelen drew back a step, and nodded.

"No mistake about this now. If you say a word, the world ain't big enough to hide you." His hand was straying toward a significant pocket. "None of your hemmings and hawings — if you're in a hurry to get to heaven, just give us away. Understand?"

Another nod, — all the farmer was capable of; and McGlory was gone with a bound, out the door, on toward the little group at the farther side of the clearing.

They heard his step and his loud breathing. "What's this?" He had just made out Roche's arm across Estelle's back. "What's *this?*" He tore the arm away, whirled Roche around, and slapped his face so hard that he staggered.

"By ——!" gasped Roche. "By ——!" They glared at each other; Estelle sobbed. "Try that again, Joe McGlory! Just try it! Hit me again! Why, you — why, I'll break your neck!"

"*You* will?"

"Yes, I will. Just hit me again!"

McGlory looked him over, decided to accept the invitation, and plunged forward. Roche, without a moment's hesitation, turned and bolted up the road, — ran as if the fiends were on his heels. McGlory finally stopped, laughed viciously, and hurled a curse after him.

The third man let them go; he merely took Estelle's arm and helped her along,

soothing her a little, trying to calm the outburst of hysteria that had been threatening for twenty-four hours. McGlory waited for them in the shadow of the woods; and a little farther on Roche fell in behind, muttering softly, and keeping well away from McGlory.

Estelle could hardly stagger along. McGlory passed his arm through hers and dragged her forward. Now she was silent, now she stifled a sob, now she begged piteously to be left behind. "Let me go back to Van Deelen's, Joe — please! I can't go on."

"I thought you was such a walker."

"Oh, but — not so far as this. Let me go back there."

"Wouldn't that be smart, now! To leave you where you could blab the whole thing!"

She tried to walk a few steps farther; then she broke away, stumbled to the roadside, and, sinking to the ground, covered her face with her hands.

Roche stopped short and stared at her. The other spoke up: "This won't do, Joe. There's no use killing her. We'll drop back in the woods and take a rest. We'll all be better for it."

McGlory sullenly consented. He dragged Estelle off through the undergrowth to the clearer ground under the trees, and they all stretched out. In five minutes Roche was the only one awake of the three men. Without raising his head he slipped over close to Estelle and rested his hand on her shoulder. She rolled over with a start. "S-sh! Not so loud, Estelle."

"Oh, it's you?"

"Yes. You didn't think I'd forgot, did you, Estelle?"

"I — I don't understand."

"Don't you think it's time to quit 'em? What's the use? I guess you know him now for what he is."

"Yes, he's mean to me. But —"

"Don't you see — we can skip out and leave 'em here, and go back near the house and hide. He wouldn't dast come back after us. The boss wouldn't never let him."

"Do you think we could? I'm afraid. He wouldn't stop at anything."

"You just leave it to me. I can take care o' *him*."

"I — I'm afraid. He's so determined. And I told him I'd go with him."

"What was he a-doin' back there in the house after he sent you out?"

"I don't know."

"Not so loud — whisper. Didn't you hear him say anything?"

"He asked for a pen and paper."

"Must 'a' wrote a letter. There it is — look there — sticking out of his pocket. Wait a minute."

"Don't you try to take it. He'll shoot you."

"Oh, damn him! I ain't afraid of two Joe McGlorys. Lemme go." He crept over, drew out the letter skilfully, and returned. "I don't like to strike a match here —"

"Oh, no, no — don't!"

"Can you crawl off a little ways — behind them bushes?"

"I guess so; I'll try." He helped her. "S-sh — careful."

Behind the bushes they felt safer. Roche lighted a match and held up the paper. This is what they read: —

"Dear Madge: There's a little misunderstanding up this way and I can't get back for a little while I want some money you put the bills in a envelope to generel dilivry South Bend Indiana. Don't you try to come to me because it ain't a very pleasent situation I'll tell you later where to come don't forget the money and don't you put my name on it call me Joe Murphy. Burn this soon as you read it.

"J."

Neither saw the insolent brutality of this letter; their thoughts were elsewhere. Estelle gazed, thunderstruck. Roche held the match until it burned his finger. As he dropped it and the paper to the ground, and the dark closed in again, one of the sleepers tossed and mumbled. Estelle caught his arm.

"He told me it wasn't so," she whispered. "He told me it wasn't so."

"Oh, he's just a common, everyday liar. Madge is his wife. Didn't I tell you so the first day I come to Spencer's?"

"I don't know. What can we do? Do you think we could get away?"

"Sure thing."

"But how?"

"We'll sneak back a ways and off to one side in the woods. He can't come back and search the whole county for us. Don't you see?"

"But wouldn't *they* catch us?" She glanced toward the east, whence pursuit might come.

"Not a bit of it. Just trust me. Come on — now's the time. Move cautious till we get on the road."

He helped her up, and they stole away. For a few moments she was buoyed up by this new excitement, but soon fell back into the old weariness. She clung to Roche until he was almost carrying her. "Keep a-going," he whispered. "I'll skip back to the house and pick up something to eat, and then we'll take to the woods. They can't never catch me, I tell you. *I'll* fool 'em."

They struggled along. Halfway back to the farm-house Estelle completely lost heart. "I can't do it!" she moaned. "Stop — let me sit down."

"Not here, Estelle! Not in the road!"

"Let me down, I tell you!"

"But he may be along any minute."

"I don't care. Let me down."

"Look here, Estelle, can't you see how it is? If he gets you, he'll half kill you. And you'll have to walk farther with him than you would with me."

She was beyond reason. She clung around his neck, holding herself up even while she begged to be let down. Her condition and the terrible loneliness of the night were unnerving Roche. "Come along," he said angrily, "or I'll make you come!"

"Don't hurt me!"

"By ——! Don't you say another word!" He jerked her roughly forward, while his wild eyes sought the road behind.

"You said you'd be good to me!"

"Well, ain't I good to you? Ain't I saving your life, and you haven't got the sense to see it?"

"O dear! Don't —"

"Keep still, now — come on — Don't you say any more."

Soon they reached the clearing, and, pausing for breath in the shadows, they looked about. The night was far advanced, but a light showed in an upper window of the house. Over in

the barn a horse was thrashing about his stall; the noise was deafening after the stillness. Roche released Estelle, and to his horror she sank to the ground in a faint. He spoke to her — she did not hear. He bent over and shook her, felt her wrist and her forehead. Then he straightened up and looked back along the road. His breath came fast and hard; the loneliness was closing in on his soul. He shivered, though the air was not cold, then stepped back, mopped the sudden sweat from his face, looked down again at the woman, — even stirred her with his foot, — then turned and ran. Not down the road, for the low-browed McGlory lay sleeping there; not to the south, for the stream barred the way; but skirting the clearing to the northern edge and then plunging into the woods, endlong and overthwart, with a thousand ugly fancies hounding him, with a traitor in his bosom that opened the door for the mad thoughts freely to enter and gnaw there. He tripped on a log, pitched headlong and rolled over, scrambled up with bleeding hands, and ran on in an ecstasy of fear. And the vast black forest shut in behind him and swallowed him.

"The black forest shut in behind him."

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When Estelle's eyes opened, she returned from peace to wretchedness. Yes, the trees and the night and the swollen feet were real. She crawled toward the farm-house; something within her warned her not to try to rise. She lived months in dragging that hundred yards; the one goal of life was the low stoop and the door under the light. When she reached it, — her clothes torn, the dust ground into her face and hands, — she fainted again, and clung to the steps.

Dirck van Deelen was sitting at the window with a shot-gun across his knees. He had watched the — he could not see what it was — crawling to his door. Now he looked out and saw it lying there. Whatever, whoever it was, this would not do; so he opened the door and carried her up to the room where his frightened wife was trying to sleep.

"We'll have to take her in, Saskia."

"What is the matter? Is she hurt?"

"I don't know. I found her on the stoop. Help me examine her."

But they found no mark of bullet, knife, or blunt instrument. And while the Dutch woman worked over her, the man went for

water. At last she was brought to a sort of consciousness, and, leaving his wife to care for her, Van Deelen returned to his window and his gun.

Roche and Estelle had not been gone an hour when McGlory, haunted by the fear of pursuit, awoke. He stretched himself, sat up, and looked over to the spot where Estelle had been lying when he fell asleep. At first he thought he saw her, a darker shadow, but on rising and walking over he found no sign of her. He looked about, and called. Roche, too, was not in sight. He hesitated, not yet fully awake, then turned back and woke his companion.

"Well, what's the matter?"

"They're gone."

"Who's gone?"

"Roche and Estelle."

"How do you know? Have you looked around?"

"Come over here."

They prowled behind the trees, parted the bushes here and there, called as loud as they dared, lighted matches, and examined the ground. Finally McGlory broke out with

an oath: "The little fool! So she thinks she can serve me this way, eh?"

"You think they've skipped out?"

"Think? Do I think it? What do I want to *think* for? Didn't I see him a-hugging her?"

"He was just helping her then."

"Oh, just helping her, was he?"

"Well, what you going to do about it?"

"What'm I going to do?" McGlory was lashing his anger. His voice swelled until he was roaring out the words: "What'm I going to do? I'm going to run that Pete Roche down if I have to go to hell for him! I'm going to—"

"Drop your voice, Joe. I can hear you. How're you going to find him?"

"Who you telling to shut up?"

"Hold on, now. None o' that talk to me!"

"Oh, you think you can boss me, do you?"

"Think? I know it. Don't waste your breath trying to bluff me. I asked you how you're going to find him."

"How'm I going to—how'm I—why, I'll break his head—I'll—"

"Don't work yourself up. It won't help you any."

"You think you can talk like that to me? If you ain't careful, I'll break *your* head. I'll —"

"How are you going to find him?"

"You say another word, and I'll knock your teeth down your throat."

"I've got my hand in my pocket, Joe, and I've got a loaded gun in my hand, and if you threaten me again, I'll blow a hole through you. I've half a mind to do it anyway. A fool like you has no business getting into a scrape if he can't keep his head. I'd a heap rather kill you than get caught through your fool noise. The sooner you understand me, the better for you. Now tell me how you're going to find out which way to take."

"How —" McGlory was not a coward, but he could not face down the seasoned courage of the man before him. "Why — that's a cinch. Ain't he headed the same way we are?"

"Now, Joe, hold on. Don't be a bigger fool than you can help. You don't really think he'd take her right along over this road, do you?"

"Why — dam' it!"

"It's no good talking to you if you can't quiet down. You want to kill Roche, and you're right. I want him killed, too. The longer he's alive, the more danger for us. But if you go at him this way, he may kill you."

"Him! Kill me! Why — "

"I mean it. He's desperate, too. You can't be too sure that he'll always run like he did to-night. He's got Estelle to look out for, too. Now, it's plain that he hasn't gone down the road, because, look here, — she isn't good for more than a mile an hour, and he'd have sense enough to know we'd catch him."

"Where is he gone, then?"

"Not very far — we know that much. Likely they're back here in the woods. Or maybe they went back to Van Deelen's."

"They'd never go there."

"They might have to. I guess you don't know much about women, Joe."

"I reckon I know more'n's good for me."

"Then you ought to see she's pretty near done for."

"Estelle? She's bluffing."

"No, she isn't. Not a bit of it. When a

woman's worked up and tired out at the same time, something's likely to break. You were a fool to bring her, anyhow. I don't know why I let you."

"*You!* *You* let me!"

"You said so much about her being strong. Why, she's a child."

"Look here, you've said some things to-night that I don't like."

"Oh, have I? But this isn't getting us along any. The first thing is to look around here a little more. There are any number of ways they might have taken without going down the road."

Even McGlory could see the reason in this suggestion. They lighted matches and prowled about, peering behind trees and bushes, looking for broken or bent twigs, for any indication of the passage of a human being. But the heavy growth of trees shut out what light there was overhead, and neither was skilful enough to direct his search well.

"Find anything, Joe?"

"Not a thing. When it comes to sneaking off, Roche has head enough. It's the only thing he's good for."

"The more I think of it, Joe, the more I believe they've gone to the house."

"You're off there."

"No, I'm not. Listen a minute. Supposing they started off in the woods and tried to dodge the house. Pretty soon Estelle gives out — surer than New Year's. And it would be pretty soon, too, because the excitement wouldn't keep her up long. Now what is Roche going to do? He isn't the man to face out a bad situation like that — never in this world. He'd do one of two things — he would skip out and leave her, or he would get her to the house. If he skipped, there isn't one chance in a thousand of our finding either of them. If he took her to the house, we can get one or both. We can't stay around here much longer. We'd better try the house, and if they aren't there, or anywhere about the place, we'll go on toward Hewittson."

"You'll have to go without me, then."

"You think so?"

"I don't leave this place till I see Roche curled up stiff." This was said as quietly as McGlory could say anything, but it was convincing. The other looked keenly at him.

Suddenly McGlory, feeling in his pockets, muttered a curse and started back toward the spot where they had slept.

"What's up? Lost something?"

"None of your business!" McGlory was searching the ground feverishly.

"If you told me what it was, maybe I could help you."

No answer. McGlory's temper was rising again. Finding nothing where he had lain, he began thrashing about the bushes.

"Unless it's something important, Joe, you're wasting a lot of time."

"Well, say — you — you ain't seen a paper — or anything, have you?"

"A letter?"

"Not exactly. It wasn't in an envelope."

"Oh, you mean this, maybe." With a lighted match in one hand, he drew a folded paper from his pocket and started to open it. McGlory sprang forward, recognized it, and tried to snatch it away.

"It ain't necessary to read that. It's private business."

"I have read it."

"You have read it! You've been prying into my affairs, have you?"

"Not at all. I found this on the ground and read it. You must have written it back there when you kept us waiting. You had no business to do it. I never saw such a fool as you are." As he spoke, he touched the match to the paper.

"Here, quit that! Don't you burn that letter!"

"Now, Joe, you didn't think for a minute I'd let you send this, did you?"

"What right you got —"

"The right of self-preservation. We can't do any letter writing yet awhile. I'll help you out with money, but I won't let you do this sort of thing. Let's start back." He led the way to the road, McGlory sullenly following; and side by side they stepped out for the farm-house. "Beastly sort of a thing to do, Joe,— ask Madge for money to help you run off with this woman."

"Well, I'd like to know — Ain't she had enough from me —"

"I don't doubt she has stood a good deal from you. What sort of a woman is she, Joe?"

"Madge? Oh, she's all right."

"Pretty fond of you, isn't she?"

"I guess there ain't much doubt about that."

"I've noticed her a little."

"Oh, you have, have you?"

"Certainly. What else can you expect, skylarking around this way?"

"That's all right. A man's got to have his fling. But when it comes to —"

"Madge is a fine-looking woman. I don't believe you know how pretty she is, Joe. If you got her decent clothes, and took her out to the theatre now and then, so she could keep her spirits up, she would be hard to beat."

This was a new idea to McGlory. But what he said was, "Seems to me you've done a lot of thinking about my wife."

"It's your own fault. But look here, do you think such an awful lot of Estelle?"

"Oh, yes. I've had some fun with her. Of course, she ain't the woman that Madge is."

"I was wondering a little —" McGlory's companion paused.

"What was you wondering?"

"What you're going to do with Estelle when you find her."

"Do with her? Why — why —"

"You didn't think she'd come right back to you — things the same as they was before — did you?"

"Why —"

"Did she know you had a wife?"

"Well, no, — she didn't know that."

"But she does now. She has read the letter."

McGlory had not thought of this.

"Estelle isn't altogether a fool, you know. Not so bad as Roche — or you. If I were you, I'd stick to Madge. If you don't, some better fellow will."

"Who do you mean now, for instance?"

"Never mind who I mean. I don't think you've seen yet how mussy this business is. Here Estelle is, like enough, on our hands. Now we can't leave her behind. She wouldn't come along with you; and even if she would, she isn't strong enough. If we did leave her here, it simply means that she would be blabbing out the whole story to the first good-looking chap that asked her a few questions."

"But don't you see? I can't let a man insult me like Roche done."

"No, you can't. But if you could fix

things so Roche nor nobody could get her, and still you'd be free to go back to Madge, you wouldn't object, would you?"

"Why, no — sure not. How do you mean?"

"If you find her there at the house, or in the barn, or anywhere around, you'd better just — here, your knife ain't much good. Take mine." He opened his clasp knife — the blade was five inches long — and held it out.

McGlory took it, stood still in his tracks looking at it, and then raised his eyes to the face of his companion.

"Well — have you got the nerve?"

"Have I got the nerve!" McGlory laughed out loud, and thrust the open knife into his belt, at the side, under his coat.

"I wouldn't use a gun unless I had to." He paused, laid his hand on McGlory's arm, and dropped his voice. "Look there! There's a light in the window."

McGlory swelled with rage. "I'll put a stop to this!"

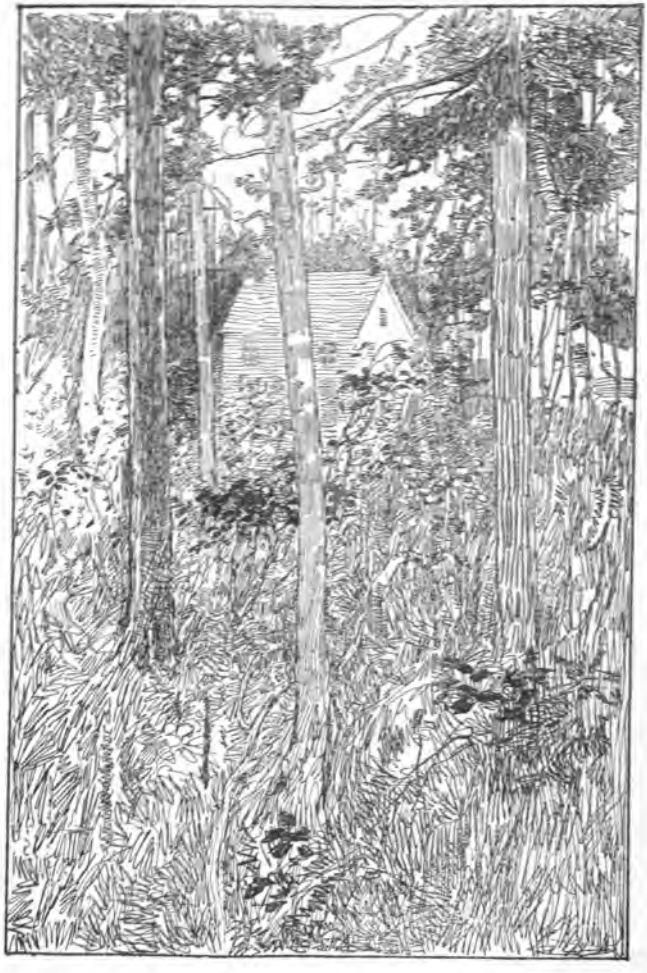
"Hold on a minute, Joe. I'll slip around the bank of the creek here, the other side of

the barn, so I can watch the road and the barn both." He ran silently away, dodging among the trees, and in a moment had disappeared. While McGlory was standing there, breathing hard and twitching impatiently, he passed behind the barn-yard, keeping always among the trees of the bank, and on to the bridge. Here he looked carefully around, then stooped under the beams of the bridge flooring and got into a scow that lay there.

McGlory stood still as long as he could, then, throwing the reins to his temper, he strode toward the house.

CHAPTER XII

THE MEETING



CHAPTER XII

THE MEETING

IT was between eleven o'clock and midnight when McGlory and his companion returned to Van Deelen's; it was between ten and eleven of this same Thursday night when Axel Lindquist was taken sick on the road, not a long walk from his father's house.

In less than an hour Beveridge and his companions reached a turn in the road and found themselves at the top of the slope, — it was hardly a hill, — with Van Deelen's bridge a little way below them, and the farm-yard beyond. Beveridge extinguished the lantern.

"Look there!" Wilson exclaimed.

"Where?"

"At the house yonder. Don't you see there's a light burning?"

"That's a fact. We'll move a little quietly, boys. Bert, you step around between the

house and the barn and keep an eye on the back door. Harper will be with you."

They started down toward the bridge while Beveridge was speaking. When they had crossed over, Harper stopped.

"Can you wait just a minute? I've got a stone in my shoe."

"We'll go ahead. Come on as soon as you can and join Bert out by the barn." And the three passed on, leaving Pink on a log at the roadside.

Beveridge and Smiley went up to the front door and knocked. There was no response. But for the light in one window, the house might have been deserted. Beveridge knocked again. "Open up in there!" he shouted. But no one answered. Smiley turned and looked around the dim clearing with a shudder. "Lonesome, isn't it?" he said. "What a place to live!"

Beveridge's mind was bent on getting in. "So they won't answer, eh? We'll see." He stepped back to the ground, picked up a length of cord-wood, and struck a heavy blow on the door. At this, a head appeared in an upper window.

"Who's there?"

"Open your door and I'll tell you."

"Tell me who you are, first."

"A special agent of the United States Treasury Department."

"What do you want me for?"

"I don't care anything about you. I want the men you have hidden here."

"There ain't nobody here but my wife and me."

"Will you open, or shall I break in your door?"

"Wait a minute! Don't break it! How do I know you're what you say you are?"

"Smiley, fetch a rail, will you please?"

"Hold on there! I'll be down in a minute." The minute was not a quarter gone when the same voice was heard through the door, saying, "You haven't told me your names yet."

"Are you going to open this door?"

"Yes, yes. Don't get impatient now." The bolt slid back, and the door opened a few inches. These inches were promptly occupied by Beveridge's foot.

"What's your name, my friend?" asked the special agent.

"Van Deelen. I don't see what you want here. There ain't nobody here but us."

"We'll see about that." Beveridge, as he spoke, threw his weight on the door and forced it open so abruptly that the farmer was thrown back against the wall. He entered with Smiley close at his heels. "Of course," he went on, as he shut it behind him, "if there isn't anything really the matter here, you won't mind my looking around a little."

"Why, no — oh, no — only —"

"Only what?"

"My wife's down sick, and any noise or excitement might upset her."

"Nervous trouble, maybe."

"Yes, something of that sort."

"Has to keep her room, I suppose?"

"Yes, yes."

"Room shut up so noise won't disturb her?"

"Yes, we keep it shut."

"Place got on her nerves a little, maybe. Should think it would be sort of monotonous here. No doctor, I suppose?"

"No, not this side of Hewittson."

"How long has she been troubled?"

"Why — "

"Sudden attack, to-day or yesterday? Sick headache, and all that?"

"Yes — she has a bad headache."

"Good deal of nausea, too? Sight of food distasteful?"

"Oh, yes, she doesn't want anything to eat."

"Can't keep anything on her stomach? Lost interest in living — no enthusiasm for anything? Is that the form it takes?"

"Why, yes — yes — "

"Curious thing. Seems to prevail in this neighborhood. Young Lindquist, back up the road, has the same trouble."

Van Deelen's stolid face wore a puzzled expression. He seemed not to know how far to resent this inquisition. "Say," he asked, "what do you want?"

"I want to know if you always receive folks with a shot-gun?"

"Why — "

"Bad characters in the neighborhood, maybe. Have they been giving you trouble to-night?"

"Who're you talking about?"

"McGlory and the rest. When did they come?"

"There hasn't anybody been here."

"Oh, all right. That's first-rate — would you mind stepping up and telling your wife the doctor has come?"

"You ain't a doctor."

"Come, my friend, don't contradict. I'm afraid we'll have to take a look into her room."

"Oh, you will!"

"Yes. We'll walk around this floor a little first. Will you entertain him a minute, Smiley?"

Beveridge slipped away, leaving the two standing at the foot of the stairs. He moved from room to room, carrying a lamp which he had found in the front room and had lighted. Soon he returned, set down the lamp where he had found it, and joined Smiley and the farmer. "So Estelle's had her hair cut," he observed.

Van Deelen shot a glance at him, but Beveridge went easily on. "Now we'll go upstairs, Dick."

Van Deelen, gun in hand, retreated upward

a few steps and barred the way. Beveridge looked at him, then he stepped quickly up and seized the gun by barrel and stock. The farmer could easily have shot him, but he made no attempt. And now the two men silently wrestled there, Van Deelen in the more advantageous position, but Beveridge showing greater strength than his figure seemed to promise. Finally, with a quick wrench, the special agent got possession of the weapon and passed it down to Smiley. "Now, Mister van Deelen," he said, "will you please stand aside?"

For reply the farmer began retreating backward up the stairway, always facing Beveridge, who followed closely. Dick drew the shells from the gun, tossed it into the front room, and came after. The upper hall was square, and of the three doors around it only one was closed. Beveridge stepped into each of the open rooms, and then tried the door of the third, while Van Deelen stood sullenly by.

"Will you open this door?" Beveridge asked, with the beginnings of impatience.

No reply from the farmer. Smiley drew Beveridge aside and whispered, "Maybe it's true that she's sick in there."

"Not much."

"But we haven't found her anywhere around the house."

"If she *is* there, she isn't alone."

"But I kind of hate to break into a woman's room this way."

"Don't get chicken-hearted, Dick." He turned to the farmer and asked again, "Will you open this door?"

There was no reply.

Without another word Beveridge threw himself against it; but it was stoutly built and did not yield. All three heard a gasp of fright from within.

"Hold on, Bill," Smiley exclaimed. "No use breaking your collar-bone. I'll get a rail."

He said this with the idea of bullying either the farmer or the persons within the room into opening the door, but Van Deelen remained sullen and motionless. Beveridge, however, caught up the idea; and with a "Wait here, Dick," he ran down the stairs. In entering the house they had closed the door after them, and now Beveridge had to stop and fumble a moment with the lock.

But it was only a moment, and pulling it open he plunged out.

A breathless man with his hat pulled down was starting up the steps. Beveridge stopped short; so did the breathless man. For an instant they stood motionless, one staring down from the top step, the other staring up from the bottom. Then Beveridge saw, in the shadow of the hat-brim, a black mustache; and at the same instant the owner of the mustache recognized the figure above him.

Not for worlds would Beveridge have called out. He had McGlory fairly in his hands, — the moment he had been hoping for, almost praying for, had come, — and he could never have resisted the desire to take him single-handed. McGlory was heavy, muscular, desperate — these were merely additional reasons. Beveridge had known little but plodding work for weeks and months — here was where the glory came in. And glory was what he craved — a line in the papers, the envy of his associates, the approbation of his superiors.

And so, when he saw McGlory before him

in the flesh, silently tugging at something in his hip pocket, he not only sprang down on him as a mountain lion might leap on its prey, — not only this, but he took pains, even in this whirling moment, to make no noise in the take-off. McGlory got the revolver out, but he was a fifth of a second too late. Just as he swung it around, the special agent landed on him, caught his wrist, gripped him around the neck with his other arm, and bore him down in the sand of the dooryard. Neither made a sound, save for occasional grunting and heavy breathing. They rolled over and over, Beveridge now on top, now McGlory. McGlory was hard as steel; Beveridge was lithe and quick. If McGlory gripped him so tight around the body that it seemed only a question of seconds before his ribs must go, one after another, Beveridge never slackened his hold of that bull-like neck. McGlory struggled to turn the revolver toward Beveridge; but Beveridge held to his wrist and bent it back — back — until any other man must have dropped the weapon for the sheer pain of it.

The door had swung to behind Beveridge

as he went out; the horse was thrashing in the barn; and Dick, leaning against the closed door of Mrs. van Deelen's bedroom, looking at the farmer, heard nothing of the struggle that was going on outside. He was wondering what interest this farmer could have in a gang of smugglers. He decided to ask. This business of standing opposite him and exchanging the glances of two hostile dogs was not a pleasant experience for a man of Dick's sociable humor.

"I've been wondering, Van Deelen, what you're acting this way for."

A suspicious glance was all this remark drew out.

"I don't believe you're mixed up with that crew, and I don't see how you can be interested in covering their tracks. Are you sure you aren't taking the wrong tack?"

"I ain't covering anybody's tracks. You don't know what you're talking about."

"Can't you see that we don't enjoy breaking into people's houses and prying around in bedrooms?"

"What do you do it for then?"

"What do we do it for! Why, McGlory

and his gang are smugglers — they're a bad lot. And this man with me is a government officer."

"That ain't telling why you come *here*."

"Now, Van Deelen, what's the use of keeping up that bluff? It doesn't fool anybody. We know all about their coming here. We've tracked them this far. This officer will never leave the house until he has opened this door and seen who you've got in here. I can promise you he'll act like a gentleman. Now don't you think it would be a good deal better just to open up and be done with it?"

Having no reasonable answer to this, Van Deelen fell back into his sullen silence.

"Wonder what's taking him so long," Dick observed. "Would he have to go far for a rail?"

There was no answer.

Altogether, it was not a cheerful situation. Dick, who had borne up capitally so far, now experienced a sinking of spirits. He looked first at the glum figure before him, then at the dingy walls and ceiling, then down into the shadows of the stairway. Seeing nothing that could prop his spirits, he fell to humming

"Baby Mine." "Oh, I beg your pardon," he broke out, interrupting himself; "maybe I'm disturbing your wife?"

There was no answer.

"You're a hilarious old bird," said Dick.

No answer — nothing but that glum Dutch face.

"Oh, well — go to thunder!"

Not even a gleam of anger disturbed those Dutch eyes. Dick, his feeble struggle over, succumbed to the gloom and was silent. And such silence as it was! The horse, over in the barn, had ceased kicking about; the air was still. The creakings of the old house sounded like the tread of feet. The loud breathing of the person within the closed room could be distinctly heard.

There was a shot outside — then silence — two more shots — again the silence. It is curious how a revolver shot, in the stillness of the night, can be at once startling and insignificant. Curious, because it is not very loud — no deafening report — no reverberation — but merely a dead *thud*, as if the sound were smothered in a blanket. And yet it was loud enough to raise goose-flesh all over Dick's body and

the stairs, and stood aside to let the farmer take the lead.

Van Deelen tapped at the door, and softly called, "Saskia!"

"What is it?"

"You have to open the door and let this gentleman in."

"Mercy, no!"

"But you have to!"

"Then,—" the voice was very fluttery and agitated—"then wait a minute after I unlock the door."

The bolt was slipped, and they could hear a frantic rustling and scampering. Van Deelen opened the door and entered the room with Beveridge and Smiley at his heels. As they entered, another door, evidently leading to a closet, was violently closed.

The three men stood a moment in the middle of the room without speaking, then Beveridge walked over to the bed. The woman lying there had turned to the wall and drawn the coverlet over her face. Beveridge bent over and jerked it back. "Smiley," he called, "come here and see if this ain't your old friend, Estelle!"

"Hold on," said Dick. "There's that cord-wood we used on the front door."

"That will do."

So they went back and picked up the heavy stick. At this moment Harper came running up, his shoe in his hand. "I didn't know you was going to be in such a thundering hurry to begin the shooting, Mr. Beveridge. I 'most cut my foot to pieces running up here."

"Come along, Dick," said Beveridge.

"Good Lord!" gasped Harper, suddenly taking in the figure of the special agent. "What they been doing to you?"

But Beveridge gave no heed to the question. "Stay here at the steps, Harper, and if any more come up, don't let 'em get away from you." With the cord-wood on his shoulder, he entered the house and started up the stairs. But Van Deelen hurried after him and caught his arm.

"Well, what do you want?"

"You needn't use that."

"You'll let me in?"

"Yes."

Beveridge promptly set down his burden on

Van Deelen indicated the washstand, and Smiley fetched the pitcher. Beveridge sat on the edge of the bed and stroked her forehead with the cool water. He asked Van Deelen for some whiskey, and forced a little between her teeth. Finally her eyes opened.

"There," said Beveridge, "that 's better. You'll be all right in a minute. Now tell me why they left you."

"Look here, Bill," said Dick, "I can't stand this."

Beveridge paid no attention, but went on stroking her forehead. "Tell me why they left you, Estelle. They weren't very square with you."

"It was Pete —" The whiskey had revived her a very little.

"Yes, I know. You were mistaken in Pete. He never meant to stand by you."

"He said —"

"Yes — go on."

"He said we — we could get away — and —"

"Yes?"

"— and they were asleep and — and then we saw the house, and — oh, I can't think —"

"Bill, — for heaven's sake!" cried Dick.

"Yes, it's all right, Estelle. You're all safe now. Try to think."

"I guess I fainted — Pete was gone — and I — I don't know — how I got to the house — "

"That will do. Go to sleep, Estelle. We'll take good care of you." Beveridge rose, and looked significantly toward the closet door. "Now, Mister," he said, addressing the farmer, "we'll just take a look in that closet before we go, and — "

A protesting voice, muffled by hanging garments, but shrill nevertheless, came from the closet, and Beveridge smiled. "Is it your wife?" he asked. Van Deelen nodded. And then, the smile lingering, Beveridge led the way out of the room.

As they started down the stairs, Dick observed: "You were awful quiet down there with McGlory, Bill. I'd heard your second shot before I knew anything was happening."

"You never heard my second shot."

"I didn't? I'd like to know why I didn't."

"Because I only fired once."

"Then who did the rest of it? By Jove! Where's Wilson?"

Beveridge turned sharply at the question. "That's a fact," he muttered. They had reached the front steps by this time, and could see Harper ostentatiously standing guard with drawn revolver. "Say, Pink, have you seen Bert anywhere?"

"No. Thought he was inside with you."

"Step around the house, quick. We'll go this way."

They found Wilson lying on the ground, not far from the front of the house. He had plunged forward on his face, with his arms spread out before him. Apparently he had been running around from the rear to join Beveridge when the ball brought him down. In an instant the two men were kneeling by him.

"How is it, Bill? Can you tell?"

"He isn't gone yet. Get a light, will you?"

Dick ran back into the house and brought out Van Deelen with a lamp and some improvised bandages. Beveridge had some practical knowledge of first aid to the injured; and the farmer seemed really to have some little skill, as a man must who lives with his family twenty-five miles from a physician. And so

between them they managed to stanch the flow of blood while Dick and Pink were carrying a small bed out of doors. With great care not to start the flow again, they carried him into the front room.

"Did you notice," said Beveridge to Smiley, when they had made him as comfortable as they could, "where he was hit?"

"In the back, wasn't it?"

"Yes, and a little to the right. Now if he fell straight, — and I think he did, because the way he went shows that he was running, and that he simply pitched forward, — the shot must have come from near the bridge, maybe from those trees a little down-stream from the bridge. Now there's just one man could have done it, to my notion. He was an old hand, because it was a pretty shot at the distance and in that light."

"Who do you think?"

"Well, now, there's Roche. He skipped out some time ago and left Estelle in the woods. He wouldn't have done that unless he was badly scared, would he? Isn't he a pretty poor lot, anyway — no nerve, just bluster?"

"That's Pete. If he is fairly started running, he won't stop to-night."

"That's about what I thought about him. It's pretty plain he would never have come back here with McGlory after him — you see McGlory *had* come after him, — he was chasing Roche because he had run off with Estelle — and made such a cool shot as that was. So we'll rule out Roche. And McGlory is ruled out too, and Estelle."

"Oh —"

"So that leaves just 'the boss' — Spencer."

"That sounds reasonable."

"He has nerve enough for anything, hasn't he?"

"He looks as if he had."

"Now I'll tell you what we'll do. We'll get this Dutch woman to nurse Bert here, and then the four of us will step down to the bridge and see what we can make of it — or hold on; I'll take Van Deelen and go to the bridge, and you and Harper can go down to the creek below the barn and work up to the bridge. What do you think of that?"

"First-rate."

"You aren't too fagged?"

"Not me — not while the rest of you are on your pins."

"That's the talk. I'll see about the woman here."

"Say, Bill, wait a minute. You aren't planning to walk right up to the bridge, are you?"

"Sure. Why not?"

"If I was you, I'd work around through the trees a little. He may be there yet, and we know how he can shoot."

"What's the use? It's all a gamble anyhow. The thing to do is to go on the run. A man is a good deal like a dog, you know. If you run right at him and show all over you that you mean business, why, even if he thinks he is ready for you, it's likely to bother him. Upsets his nerve — starts him thinking he is on the losing side."

CHAPTER XIII

WHISKEY JIM

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BEFORE the four men left the house Wilson revived and asked for his chief. Beveridge, his torn coat thrown aside, hurried back and bent over the bed. "What is it, Bert?"

"That's what I was going to ask you. I don't remember — exactly — "

"You were running around the house when somebody winged you. It doesn't amount to anything — you'll be around in a day or so."

"Oh, yes — that's it. It was some fellow behind, wasn't it? I remember I didn't see anybody ahead."

"Yes — he was a little below the bridge, as I figure it."

"Yes — yes — don't you see, Bill? That's where Harper was — he stayed behind with some yarn about his shoe — had a stone in it."

"Keep quiet, Bert! don't get worked up—"

"But think of it, Bill! What you going to do now?"

"I'm going to find the man that hit you."

"Not with those two, Smiley and Harper?"

"Why, certainly."

"But don't you see, Bill? That's just what they want. They've got rid of me—now they'll draw you off into the woods—why, you're putting yourself right in their hands!"

"You'd better try to think of something else, Bert. Mrs. van Deelen here is going to take good care of you. I'll stop in on the way back." And Beveridge slipped out the door without giving Wilson further opportunity to protest.

The others were waiting impatiently at the steps. Smiley and Harper at once started off toward the creek below the barn; and Beveridge set out on a run for the bridge, telling the farmer to follow.

When he reached the creek, Beveridge searched through the trees for some distance down-stream and then up-stream, but found no sign of a man. "Well," he said, joining

Van Deelen at the end of the bridge, "he got away all right."

"Did you look under the bridge?"

"Yes. Nothing there."

The farmer stood still for a moment, thinking; then he clambered down the bank and peered into the shadow under the bridge floor. "Come down here," he said. And when Beveridge had reached his side, standing ankle-deep in the muddy water, he went on, "See that?"

"No — wait a minute, I can't see anything yet. What is it?"

"Feel this rope. It's been cut."

"Oh," murmured Beveridge, "I see. A boat."

"Yes. He has stolen my boat."

"Of course — and slipped off down-stream as easy and quiet as you like. He's a cool hand, that Spencer. Come back up here — we'll go on down and meet Smiley. Wait, though, he might be hiding anywhere down the stream here. Are there many bushes and such along the bank?"

"Yes, it's grown up pretty heavy. I never had any reason for keeping it cleared."

"Well, then, we'll keep down here close to the water where we can see things."

"It'll be pretty wet. Will you wait while I get my boots? My rheumatism's been pretty bad this year—"

"Go back, then. I can't wait for you."

And with this, Beveridge pushed off down the stream. Van Deelen, after a moment's hesitation, followed. They met the other party just above the barn.

"See anything?" asked Dick.

"Yes. He has gone down in a boat." Beveridge turned to the farmer. "Does the creek go on far in this direction?"

"No, it turns off south pretty soon."

"Would it take him anywhere especial?"

"No—just into the woods."

"No houses south of here?"

"Not for a long way."

"And it's sluggish like this all along, isn't it? Full of snags and shallows?"

"Oh, yes, he couldn't go very fast."

"All right. Come on, boys."

On they went, walking over the spongy ground below the bank or splashing softly through the water. They did not speak, but

followed their leader eagerly through the moving shadows. The trees arched over their heads, the water slipped moodily onward, blacker than the shadows. Now and then they stumbled over projecting roots, or stepped down knee-deep in some muddy hole; all the while their eyes strove to pierce the dark, searching for a boat in the gloom of the opposite bank, or for a man among the bushes above, even glancing overhead into the trees, where a desperate man might have hidden. At length they reached an opening in the trees of the right bank, and Beveridge, stepping up, found that the road here paralleled the creek.

"Which way now?" asked Dick.

"No sign of a boat, is there?"

"No."

"Then keep on down-stream."

They divided now in order to watch both banks, for the creek had widened a little and the shadows were dense. It was Smiley and Harper who waded across, stepping down waist-deep in the water and mud. Not a word was spoken. The only sound was the low splash-splash of four pairs of feet, with now and then

the noise of heavy breathing or a muttered exclamation as one or another stumbled into a hole.

"Hello — ouch!"

The voice was Pink Harper's. At this point the trees had shut in overhead, and the dark was impenetrable. Beveridge and Van Deelen could see nothing across the creek, not even the blot of denser black which told Smiley, only a few feet behind, where his companion had stopped.

"What is it?" came in a low voice from Beveridge.

"Hit my shin. Hold on — feels like a boat. Guess you'd better come across."

Without a moment's hesitation the special agent turned to the left and plunged into the stream. At this point it was deeper, and he found himself submerged to the armpits. To save time he drew up his feet and swam across until his knees struck bottom. And then the three of them, — Van Deelen waited on the farther bank, — now dimly visible to each other, stood side by side feeling of the boat.

"You'll have to come over here," said Bev-

eridge to the farmer, "and tell us if it's your boat."

Van Deelen had no mind to swim. "Can't you strike a match?" he asked.

"Strike your aunt!" growled Beveridge, wringing his wet clothes.

"Well, say, that ain't necessary anyhow. My boat's the only one on the creek."

"Why didn't you say that before I swam over?"

"Well, I —"

"You want to watch out or you'll be coming down with brain fever one of these days. Come, boys, we'll go back."

"You think what he did was to take to the road back up there and set the boat adrift?" asked Pink.

"Of course." The words came from the deeper water, where the special agent was already swimming back. A moment more and Dick and Pink were after him.

"Now, Mister van Deelen," said Beveridge, when they had gathered together, "take us to the road."

"It's right back up-stream. You know where it is as well as I do."

"Can't we strike right over through the woods?"

"Why, yes, you could do —"

"All right, Dick. It'll be lighter when we get up out of this hole."

They floundered through a hundred yards of undergrowth and finally came upon the open road. They were a dismal enough party. The water in their shoes gurgled when they moved and spurted out at the lacings in little streams. Other streams ran down their clothing to the road, where the sand drank them up. Beveridge was without coat or collar, and the others were nearly as dilapidated. The physical strain of the chase, and the loss of sleep, not to speak of Beveridge's fight with McGlory, had worn them down nearly to the point at which nature asserts her peremptory claims, — but not one of them knew it. They did not know that they were a desperate spectacle in the eyes of the bewildered farmer; even if they could have stood in the light of day and looked full at one another, it is to be doubted if any of the three would have observed the deep-lined, white faces, the ringed eyes, of the other two. For the spirit of the chase was in them.

"Now, Mister Van," said Beveridge, almost gayly, "how far is it to the next house?"

"Why — why —"

"Don't think too fast. A man died that way once."

"There's an empty house about a mile from here."

"All right, we'll make for that. I want you, Van Deelen, to hitch up a wagon and come on after us as quick as you can."

The farmer turned at once and walked rapidly up the road.

"Spencer hasn't much start of us," said Beveridge, as the three men started in the opposite direction.

"He couldn't have. It took him a good while to work down here in that boat. We'll get him if he keeps the road."

"He'll have to do that. If he took to the woods, he would be lost in an hour — and that means starvation."

Pink ventured a pleasantry, "Maybe he's got a compass," of which the special agent took not the slightest notice; but said, turning to Smiley, "How are your legs, Dick?"

"Fine. Trim as they make them."

"Feel up to a dog trot?"

"Half a dollar even, I'll beat you to the deserted house."

"Hold on, don't get to sprinting. Save your wind. An easy jog will do it."

All three fell at once into an easy running gait, Smiley and Beveridge side by side, Pink laboring along in the rear.

Five minutes later Beveridge paused for breath. "We must have run nearly a mile by this time, boys."

"Easily."

"Not so loud. Doesn't it look to you as if the road turned — up ahead there?"

It did look so; and as they went on toward the turning it grew plain that they were approaching a clearing.

"Wait, boys," whispered the special agent. "This ought to be the place, — we don't want to move quite so carelessly now. Dick, you go around to the left, and I'll take the right; Pink, you give us two or three minutes and then move in quietly toward the clearing. In that way we shall all three close in together. Wait a few minutes now."

The two men disappeared in the woods, one

on each side of the road, and Pink was left alone in the shadows. At first he could hear now and then a low rustle as one or the other brushed through the bushes, but soon these sounds died away. He was standing in the shadow at the roadside, gazing with fixed eyes at the opening in the trees and stumps a hundred yards farther along. He wondered if the three minutes were up. It was too dark to use his watch. Waiting there under the stars, the minutes spun out amazingly; all sense of the passage of time seemed to have left him. He moved forward a few steps,—but no, it was too early; Dick and Beveridge had surely not had time to get to their positions. Still, what if he should wait too long, and not arrive in time to act in concert with the others?

Out on the Lakes, with a slanting deck underfoot and a dim shore-line somewhere off in the night, Pink's soul would have thrilled in unison with the stars, but here, buried in the gloom of the pine stumps,—those straight, blackened poles that stood in endless monotony,—his soul was overwhelmed. A panic seized him; he knew he would be late; and he took to gliding along in the shadows, nearer

and nearer, until, seeing plainly that the road swung around to the right, and that the clearing was overgrown with tall weeds and was surrounded by a stump fence, he paused again. His feet sinking at each step in the sand, he made no sound.

He stood motionless. Over the weeds he made out the sagging roof of a small building. Then, forgetting that his own figure was invisible against the black of the forest, he dropped to the ground and, flat on his face, wriggled forward. A row of sunflowers grew inside the fence. At one point was a cluster of them, standing out high above the weeds. Cautiously inch by inch he crept nearer. The bunched stalks, outlined so distinctly against the sky, fascinated him by their resemblance to the hat, head, and shoulders of a human being.

Nearer — nearer — a moment more and he would be able to place his hand against the fence. He was holding his breath now; afterward he could never tell what was the slight noise he must have made. Or perhaps it was the sense that tells one when a person has silently entered a room that caused the figure — just as Pink, lying there on the sand

and looking up, had made sure that it *was* a figure and not a clump of sunflowers — to look around, up and down. Pink scrambled to his feet and plunged recklessly forward. The man, who had been sitting on the fence, quietly dropped down on the inner side.

A stump fence is not easy to climb, and Pink was on the outer side, where the tangled masses of roots spread out into a *cheveau-de-frise* which, in the dark, seemed insurmountable. When he had finally got to the top, at the expense of a few scratches, a disturbance in the weeds near the front of the house told him where the fugitive had taken refuge. He promptly set up a shout.

"Ho-o-ho!" came simultaneously from Smiley and Beveridge.

"Here he is!"

"Where?"

"In the —" Pink was balancing on the fence. Before he could finish his shout a revolver shot sounded from the house, and he went tumbling down into the enclosure.

"What's that! Are you hit?"

"No — just lost my balance. Close in — he's in the house." He was getting to his

feet during this speech and feeling himself, not sure, in spite of his statement, whether it was the noise or the bullet that had upset him. But he could find no trace of a wound.

"Keep your places!" Beveridge was calling to the others. "Keep your places! Now then, Mr. Spencer, we have you cornered. You can have your choice of giving up now or being starved out. Which will it be?"

No answer from the house.

"Speak up! I don't propose to waste much more time on you."

This time the fugitive decided to reply; but his reply took the form of a second shot, sent carefully toward the spot in the weeds from which the voice seemed to be coming.

"Hi!" shouted Pink, "did he get you?"

"No. Shut up, will you?"

The man with the revolver was plainly an old hand, for now he fired a third time; and the shot came dangerously near, whether by luck or otherwise, to shutting up the speaker for all time. Beveridge dropped hastily behind a log that lay at his feet. Then, disgusted with himself, he scrambled boldly up and stood on the log.

Pink was obediently silent, though trembling with excitement. The stillness of the forest fell suddenly in upon them. For a few moments nothing was said or done. The man in the house had a momentary advantage which all recognized. What light the sky gave was all upon the clearing, and to move, however cautiously, through that tangle of weeds and bushes without setting the tops to waving, was impossible. The building was so small that the man could, with little effort, command all four sides. And so Beveridge decided on a council of war with Smiley. At his first movement another shot came cutting through the bushes; but he laughed aloud, and went deliberately on in a quarter circle until he found Smiley. "Well," he said softly and gleefully, "we've got him."

"If we can keep awake as long as he can. What are you going to do now?"

"Wait till dawn, and see how he stands it. No, don't look at me. Keep your eyes on the house. He's too slippery to run chances with. It oughtn't to be so very long now. How about you — can you keep up all right?"

"Me? Why, certainly."

"All right, then. I'll go around and take the boy's place, so he can rest a bit. Keep a close watch. So long."

"So long."

The special agent went on around his circle, and found Pink near the fence. "I'll be here for a while, Harper. You'd better try to get some sleep."

"Me — sleep?"

"Take your chance while you have it."

"Moses and the bulrushers! You don't think I could sleep now?"

"Just as you like."

To the three watchers there seemed to be a breakdown somewhere on the line that leads to dawn. The hours dragged until they stopped short. All the real things of this world, cities and schooners and houses on stilts and long reaches of blue water, had slipped back into the dim land of dreams. Nothing was real but the brooding forest, the rank weeds with their tale of desolation, the sand — sand — sand. Even Beveridge, sitting on his log, gave way. At each sound from the forest, — a crackle or a rustle, — he started like a nervous woman. Chilled by the night air and

his wet clothes, he shivered until his teeth rattled.

A husky, plaintive voice rose into the night, singing. It came from Harper's post near the stump fence.

"A fu-nee-ral per-cession was a-passin' down a street
That was lin'd with mansions stately, rich, and grand;
A tiny girl was sobbin', her lit-tull heart most broke,
A tear-stained hank-er-chuff was in her hand.
A tall and stately gentlemun, touched *by* her sorry plight,
For she was pale and ragged, thin and wan,
He stopped and took her lit-tull hand, and gently bending o'er,
'Don't cry, my child, I'll help you if I can.'"

All the horrors of the night and the forest were gathered up into that wailing voice. Beveridge shuddered. But Pink was warming up to it now, sharing his misery with the night. If the verse had been doleful, the refrain was worse: —

"'Mother's in the coffun, sir,
Mother's left her home;
The ainjulls come and took her up on high.
But if I'm good and kindly, sir,
And never off do roam,
I'll meet her in the sweet by-and-by.'"

Beveridge rose uncertainly to his feet. The song went on: —

"'Tell me your name, my lit-tull child,' the gentlemun did say,
And when the words she lisping did repeat,
He staggered back in horror with remorse wrote on his face,
And —"

At this point Beveridge began moving through the weeds. Pink sang on; and he was just breaking out into the refrain, —

"'Mother's in her coffun, sir,
Mother's left her home;
The ainjulls come and took her up —'"

when he heard a sound, started, looked up, saw a dark figure bending over him, and stopped singing with a gasp.

"That'll do for you," said the dark figure.

"Oh, it's you!" exclaimed Pink, with relief.

"That'll do for you. Understand?"

Pink was silent. Beveridge slipped silently back to his log.

Night has a way of giving place to day, even such interminable nights as this. Neither hastening nor resting, with no heed for the miserable little company that surrounded the deserted house in the wilderness, the hours stepped silently on into eternity. The darkness slowly changed to blackness; then the

east brightened, the sky paled, the new day tossed its first flaming spears, and the shivering dawn was upon them.

Beveridge got up very slowly, — for a new kind of pain was shooting through his joints, — stretched, and, walking bent, like an old man, cautiously made his way to Smiley's post. The sailor was awake; but whether he had been awake all night could hardly be decided from his face. Beveridge had his suspicions, but decided not to air them.

"Look here, Dick," he began.

"All right. Go ahead."

"How are your joints?"

"Never worse. How about yours?"

"Same way. I don't know how you feel, but I've had enough."

"Can't help that, can we?"

"I can help it, and I'm going to."

"I'd like to know how."

"Keep your eyes open and you'll see. I want you to stay here under cover."

"You aren't going to storm the house?"

"Yes, sir, that's just what I'm going to do."

"Have you thought it over? He'll shoot, you know."

"There are two ways of leaving this world, Dick, that I know of. One way is to catch your death of rheumatism and go off slow; the other is to let a man who can handle a revolver make a neat, clean job of it. I don't know how you feel about it, but I prefer the neat way. Now you wait here while I —"

"Hold on, Bill. Here we have him nicely penned and our plan of siege all settled, when you up and change your tactics. I don't see the use of putting yourself up for a target when we have him sure the other way."

"That's all right, Dick."

"Here's another thing. Wilson's out of the running — suppose he puts you out too. What are Pink and I going to do? We have no authority to arrest the man. I'm not even sure that it would be to our interest to try it in such a case. Why not wait — just settle down to it. We can get something to eat from Van Deelen. Say, didn't you tell him to follow us with the wagon last night?"

Beveridge indulged in a dry smile. "Yes, I did. But I didn't more than half think he'd do it. You do as I tell you, Dick, and —"

"Well, if your mind's made up, I suppose—"

Beveridge's mind was made up. He set out without further words, and Dick watched him, uncertain of his movements, until he saw that he was circling around in the direction of the stump fence and Pink. Dick's thoughts were unsettled. Such actions were foolhardy, now that it was nearly broad daylight. It would have been no trick at all to put a few balls into the body below the waving weeds that marked the progress of the special agent. For some reason, however, the shots did not come.

Between Dick and the house there was a comparatively open space. By stepping forward a few yards he would emerge into full view of the man in the house, whereas on Pink's side the growth was rank, and Beveridge, if he should go directly to the house after giving Pink his directions, would not be visible until he should have nearly reached the door. But the telltale weeds!—there was something in the thought of Beveridge being shot down like a porcupine as he floundered through the tangle that made Dick shudder.

It would be better to walk straight out into the open and be done with it.

Peering from his hiding-place, he could see that all was quiet. Beveridge had reached Pink, and was probably talking with him. But he could not hear their voices — the clearing was absolutely still. He watched — and watched — his eyes fixed on the spot where Beveridge had stopped. Perhaps his arguments had taken effect; perhaps the plan had been changed. But no, the weeds were moving again.

Dick's blood was up. He drew his revolver and plunged straight out into the open toward the house.

"Here you in there!" he shouted. "Come out or fight! Do you hear me? Come out or fight! We've got you on all sides — you can't hit us all — come out and be done with it."

The house was still. Beveridge heard Dick's voice, and knew what he was doing. He tried to run forward, tripped, and fell headlong in the briers, cursing like a buccaneer. Pink heard both the voice and the tumble, and at the instant he too was fighting

"Put up your guns, boys," said Henry.

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madly forward through the weeds. Could he be expected to obey orders? To sit and twiddle his thumbs while Dick was fighting?

Not a sound came from the house.

Dick walked deliberately to the door and hammered with the muzzle of his revolver.

"Come out," he called, "or I'll smash it in." He heard the man stir.

"Come out, or by ——!"

The man was walking slowly across the floor. Dick went on shouting: —

"No tricks, now! Open your door! I've got a gun on you — I've got a gun on you!"

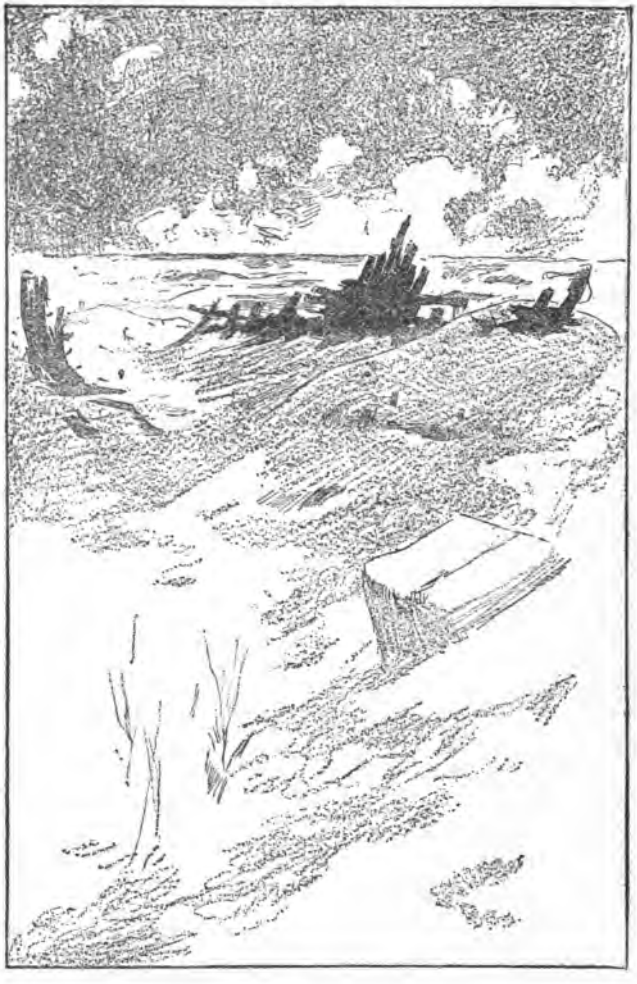
The rusty old key turned and the door swung back. As it opened, Beveridge broke out of the weeds, with Pink close after, and the three men stood bewildered, motionless, staring at the square-built figure and quiet face of — Henry Smiley.

They could not speak. Even Beveridge had lowered his weapon.

"Put up your guns, boys," said Henry, with a sort of smile. "Put up your guns; I'll go back with you."

CHAPTER XIV

HARBOR LIGHTS



CHAPTER XIV

HARBOR LIGHTS

BEVERIDGE recovered first, and said in a businesslike way, "You'll have to give me your weapons."

Henry at once handed over two large-caliber revolvers, and emptied his pockets of fully half a hundred cartridges. "It's a lucky thing for you, Mister Beveridge," he said, "that Dick came out just when he did. A minute more and I should have finished you."

But Beveridge's thoughts were not heading in the same direction. His reply was, "Where's Spencer?"

"Spencer? You didn't get him?"

"No."

"Then he's in Canada."

"Oh, I see." Beveridge turned to Smiley. "Well, Dick, for a man that got things exactly

wrong, you came nearer to being right than I should have thought possible."

As they walked back toward Van Deelen's, Henry fell in with his cousin. "You don't seem very talkative, Dick. Guess I must have surprised you."

But Dick could not find his voice to reply.

"And you surprised me too, rather. How did you happen to be up here with this man?"

"Then you don't know that he's holding me for Whiskey Jim?" cried Dick.

"No — is he?"

Dick, overcome with fatigue and emotion, nodded. Henry stopped and turned to the special agent, who was walking close behind.

"You didn't think Dick here was in this business, did you?"

"We'll discuss that later. Move along, please."

"But this won't do, Beveridge. Dick has nothing to do with it, nothing whatever."

"I suppose he didn't know where his schooner went and what he carried aboard her, eh?"

"Oh, I can explain all that. He's all right. I'm the man you want."

"I'll talk with you again, Mr. Smiley. We can't stop now."

They found Wilson in a bad way. Mrs. van Deelen had been doing her utmost during the night for her two patients, but to attempt moving either was out of the question. Beveridge left some money to cover the expense of caring for his subordinate, and Henry good-naturedly contributed toward the care of Estelle. It was arranged that Van Deelen should drive Beveridge and his party back to Spencer's, stopping on the way to send Lindquist or his boy to Hewittson for a doctor. Nothing more could be done here, and so they hurried Van Deelen into hitching up at once. Beveridge could not sleep in comfort until his prisoner should be safe under guard on the revenue cutter.

"There's one thing," said the special agent to Henry Smiley, as the four haggard men climbed into the wagon that was to take them on the long drive through the forest, "there's one thing I don't understand. Why didn't you fellows pick up a horse at one of these places

and save, instead of losing it, — will a woman ever, eh?"

"We did start in Spencer's wagon, but it broke down before we'd gone ten miles, the road was so bad."

"But we didn't see it," said Pink.

"We must have passed it on the first stretch before we found the road."

"And then," said Henry, "I thought we'd better stick it out on foot. You see, I didn't believe it would occur to you that we would take to the woods. And even if it should, I thought we should have plenty of time before you started after us. I misjudged it there, you see. I was thinking hardest about the other end of it — about what we should do when we got down into Indiana, with maybe your men on the lookout for us everywhere. And then a horse is a give-away — you can't hide it. And the road is so heavy with sand that it's 'most as quick to walk. I thought it all over and decided it that way. So we dragged the wagon off into the bushes, and led the horse off and shot him. But why didn't you ride?"

"We didn't get a chance until we reached Lindquist's. And then we were so close on

your trail — and I knew you were on foot — that I decided the same way. If we had been rattling along in a wagon, you might have heard us quarter of a mile ahead, and all you would have had to do then would be to step into the bushes and let us go by."

At a few minutes before noon the party alighted from the wagon at Spencer's wharf, where the *Merry Anne* still lay, waved a signal to the launch, and were carried out past False Middle Island to the *Foote.*

"I guess there isn't much doubt what we'll do next," said Beveridge, with a yawn, as the launch drew near to the companion-ladder, which had been let down forward of the paddle-wheel.

"I guess there ain't," Pink replied with another yawn.

"One thing, Dick," said Beveridge, "before we go away from here, — it isn't right to leave your schooner in there for the porcupines to chew to pieces."

Dick, who had been studying the bottom of the boat, looked up quickly and with a peculiar expression. After Henry's confession, would he be allowed to sail her back himself? Bever-

idge caught the look, and for an instant his face showed the faintest trace of confusion. "You see," he went on, "I've been thinking it over on the way back from Van Deelen's. It's rather an irregular thing to do, but I'm willing, if Captain Sullivan will let us have a few men, to turn the schooner over to Harper here. He's competent to handle her, isn't he?"

"Oh, yes," Dick replied in a dry voice, "he is competent enough."

Pink's eyes brightened. "Sure thing," he said, "I can run her easy."

Dick glanced at Pink, then dropped his eyes again. The boy had heard only the words; he had not caught the thoughts that were passing between his captain and the special agent. To Dick this decision, coming in the lull after the excitement, coming after what seemed to him proof of his innocence, sounded like the judge's sentence. Through the hour or two that followed, during the dinner on the steamer, after the launch had gone back into the harbor with Pink and his crew, even when the old side-wheeler had raised her anchor and started on her lumbering way around through the

Straits and up Lake Michigan to Chicago, Dick, lying dressed in his berth, was trying to puzzle out the meaning of Beveridge's words and of the momentary confusion that had accompanied them. And it did not raise his spirits that, after each struggle with the problem, his thoughts were directed to Annie. Perhaps Beveridge himself, if he had laid his thoughts bare, could not have helped him much. For it was not reasoning that had shown him the tactical folly of allowing Dick to come sailing gloriously in to Annie's very front door, — red shirt, neckerchief, and all the appurtenances of a hero; it was the instinct that made it impossible for him to resist holding every advantage that came to his hand. Beveridge had done a big thing. He had run down — killed or captured or driven out of the country — several members of the most skilful gang in the history of smuggling on the Great Lakes. He had done it alone. He was even beginning to put down his surprise over the capture of Henry Smiley, and to feel that Henry was the one man he had been after from the first. Yes, he had made his success — the thing left was to win Annie. And to do this he must not only see her

before Dick could see her; he must also arrange that Dick's appearance on the scene, when all the delays had been exhausted, should be an inglorious one. Some of his finest work was yet to come. In thinking it over, lying in his berth in the room next to Dick's, their heads not two feet apart, he fell asleep with a smile on his lips. And never had the *Foote* seen such sleeping as followed. When all three men, accusers and accused, had slept through the afternoon and on through the night, when they failed to hear even the breakfast gong, Captain Sullivan began to wonder if they meant to wake at all.

Afterward, for a day or two, all three, Beveridge, Dick, and Henry, were very quiet. They sat yawning in deck chairs, or dozed in their berths. But during this time, thanks to the sunny skies and the peaceful lake, and thanks to Beveridge's elation and good-nature, to Henry's surprising cheerfulness, and to the difficulty Dick found in showing the depth of his feelings, the relations of the three were growing more and more pleasant. By common consent they avoided discussing the chase or its cause.

On the afternoon of the last day out, Dick and Beveridge sat smoking on the after deck. The *Foote* was rumbling slowly down the coast somewhere below Milwaukee, and should make Chicago before midnight if nothing broke in the engine room. They were discussing the Michigan peach crop when Henry drew up a chair and joined them.

"Would you mind telling me," said Henry to Beveridge, filling his pipe as he spoke, "what you are going to do with Dick, here?"

So Henry was the one to open the subject. Dick's lips drew together and his hand trembled, but his eyes were steady.

Beveridge was evasive. "What am I going to do with him?" he repeated.

"Yes. You will have a good deal of say about that, won't you?"

"Why — yes, and no."

"Now that you know he had nothing to do with it, you'll be able to get him right off, won't you?"

"Why — yes, so far as I know. I should expect it to turn out that way."

Henry saw that a definite answer was not to be expected, so he puffed a moment, looking

off to the green shore-line. Finally he said, "Your man, — what's his name?"

"Wilson?"

"Yes, he's in pretty bad shape, isn't he?"

"There's no doubt about that."

"Do you think he'll pull through?"

"I couldn't say."

"What would be the penalty if he didn't?"

"That is for a judge and jury to decide."

"I suppose."

Henry paused again. Dick was gazing out at the water with fixed eyes. This cool talk made him shudder.

"I've been thinking this over," Henry went on. "Of course, you caught me red handed; and that, along with what I'm going to tell you, any time when you're ready, gives you a pretty clear case against me. My outlook isn't what you would call cheerful. I've never made a will, but I guess now is about as good a time as any to get about it. I've got my schooner, and I've got a little money put away, — some of it drawing interest and some in the bank, — and what there is of it is to go to Dick. He's the nearest approach to a relation I have, you know. And if I were you, Dick,

I should take some of it the first thing and pay up for the *Anne*. That'll make you more or less independent. Do you fellows mind coming down into the cabin and fixing it up now?"

"Certainly not," said Beveridge, rising.

Dick found it difficult to reply, but he followed them below, and sat with them at the dining-table. Beveridge got pen, ink, and paper.

"Now, I'll tell you," said Henry. "I'll just make out sort of a schedule of what I'm worth. It won't take long. I know just what it is. There, now, I guess it'll be enough to say that I devise and bequeath it all, without any conditions or exceptions, to Dick, he to take everything of mine for his own, to hold and to use in any way that he may choose. Will you witness this, Beveridge?"

"Certainly."

"We ought to have some others."

"I'll get them." Beveridge stepped out, and returned shortly with Captain Sullivan and his second officer. These put their signatures under that of the special agent and with the exchange of only a word or two returned

to their posts. Nothing could have been more matter-of-fact, could have savored more strongly of humdrum, everyday life.

The three men sat there looking at the paper. Finally Henry, with a smile, blotted it, folded it, and handed it to his cousin. "I'm going to hand this over to you, Dick," he said. "That's the easiest way of disposing of it."

Dick accepted it and turned it slowly over and over in his hands. "I — of course, Henry — I appreciate this, but — " and then his face surged with color, and he broke out in a round voice: "What's the use of talking of this sort of thing now! Wilson isn't gone yet. I don't believe he will go either. You make my blood run cold! You'd better just — "

"No," Henry interrupted. "No, I'd rather leave it like this."

"But, look here, Henry, — why, great guns! You aren't even convicted of illicit distilling yet, let alone — why, even if you should be, don't you see, you might lose a few years, but — "

"Oh, there wouldn't be any doubt about the conviction, Dick. The game is up, so far as I am concerned. Supposing I should escape,

what good would it do me? I should be a fugitive. I should have to leave the country, and go to a new place and begin all over again, just as I began here on the Lakes twenty odd years ago. I have amounted to something here,— I have held first place. I have kept these fellows," — he indicated Beveridge, with a slight upward turn at the corners of his mouth — "I have kept these fellows guessing from the start. Anywhere else I should be nobody, and at my age that doesn't appeal very strongly to a man. Supposing, even, I could buy an acquittal and stay right on here, would it be any better? You see, my boy, I have been ambitious in a way. I have built up a machine — a new kind of a machine. If I could have been let alone a year or so longer, I should have had everything running as smooth and safe as the Republican County Committee. That was the one thing I set out to do. But it's busted now. With these fellows once on to the whole thing, it could never be carried on again. Oh, in a cheap, shyster way, maybe; but that's not my way. It was my work and now it's over. And when a man has come as near success as I have, and spent the best part of his life working

up toward it, he doesn't care about beginning at the little end of something else. His mainspring is broken."

They were silent. Henry was easily the most self-possessed of the three. Finally Beveridge said: —

"You have spoken once or twice, Mr. Smiley, about telling us how you worked this business."

"Yes, certainly, any time, — now, if you like."

"You won't mind if I take down the main points and then ask you to put your name to it?"

"Not at all. I supposed of course you would want to do that."

This cold-blooded courtesy brought Dick near to shuddering again. But he straightened up in his chair and prepared to listen.

"You say you are the man known as Whiskey Jim?"

"Yes. That is the name the papers have given to the whole organization, and the organization, of course, is me."

"Would you mind talking rather slowly? I know shorthand, but I'm decidedly out of practice at it."

"Certainly not. Suppose I explain the organization in a few words."

"That'll do first-rate."

"If I forget and get to going too fast, just stop me. You see, as master of the *Schmidt*, doing a tramp lumber business all around Lake Michigan and Lake Huron, I was able to run the whole thing at both ends and still keep about my business. I didn't have to use the mails — I didn't have to do a thing that didn't look as solemn and proper as the Methodist minister and his parish calls."

"I see. It was ingenious — no doubt about it."

"To be on the safe side, I located my stills over in Canada."

"I know, — at Burnt Cove."

"Yes; it was about as inaccessible there as any place on the Lakes. And as we didn't try to sell the stuff over there, but shipped it all across to the States, we were really safe enough. I don't know what either country could have done about it, so far as the stills are concerned."

"Suppose I take it up here, Mr. Smiley, do you mind?"

"No, go ahead."

"Well, when you had got it put up and ready to ship, you brought it across Lake Huron in Spencer's schooner."

"Yes — yes."

"And at Spencer's it was repacked in the timber."

Henry smiled a little at this. "Some of it was. Of course you know better than to think that what I could bring down in a load of timber once in a month, or two, or three, was my only way of getting the goods to market."

"Oh, yes, of course."

"I have done things on a fairly large scale, you know. But you are right in the main. Spencer's was the distributing point for all our goods. The old man himself was what you might call the shipping clerk of the organization. But we'll go ahead with the timber scheme. That one line, if you follow it up, will be enough to base your case on, won't it?"

"Yes, for the present. Though you were concerned in the attempt to run a pipe line under the Detroit River."

"No, not very deep. I put a little money into it, but when I saw who was running it, I

got out. I knew they would get nipped sooner or later. They went at it wrong."

"Well, you brought your loaded timbers to the pier at Lakeville. From there they were hauled by wagons to Captain Stenzenberger's yards. Stenzenberger, working through McGlory, distributed the stuff in Chicago."

Henry shook his head with a touch of impatience. "You're getting off the track there. Stenzenberger had nothing to do with it. I fooled him through some of his men."

Beveridge looked incredulous. "So that's the way you want it to go down, is it?"

"That's the way it was."

"Excuse me, Smiley, but that's absurd. I already have a case against Stenzenberger. Even if I hadn't, it would outrage commonsense to state that this man, a lumber merchant, could handle quantities of hollow timbers, could have them right there under his nose all this time, without knowing it."

But Henry was stubborn.

"Very well," added Beveridge, "this is your statement. I will take down just what you choose to say."

"You've got about enough there, I should

imagine. Oh, about Wilson! I was in the bushes just below the bridge, when he started to run around the house, and I shot him. There, now, with the confession of the smuggling and the shooting, you ought to have a case. Copy it out, put it in the right legal shape, and I'll sign it. All but the Stenzenberger part. I admit nothing about him."

"All right. I'll put it down as you want. It makes no difference to me, for you can never save him."

"One thing, Henry," said Dick, "that I don't understand. What was McGlory after when he ran the *Anne* up to Burnt Cove that time?"

"McGlory," Henry replied, "was a fool. When you first told me about it, I didn't know what to think myself, but after thinking it over, and from the way he has talked since when he was a little drunk, I think I have made it out. He has been planning for some time to skip with this Estelle — desert his wife. He arranged it with her that time he came up with you. And as what ready money he had was down in Chicago, where he couldn't very well get at it without his wife knowing it, he

took the chance of getting to Burnt Cove while you were sleeping off—" Henry smiled. "I guess old Spencer served you some pretty strong fluids up there that day. Well, anyway, McGlory thought he could take quite a lot of the stuff aboard, sell it through one of our regular trade channels, and get off with the money without going home. He couldn't get it into his head that you really knew nothing about the business. It was a crazy thing to do."

"I should think so."

"McGlory and Roche are pretty good examples of the sort of thing I have had to contend with. I've never been able to get good reliable men to work for me."

Beveridge wanted to smile over the incongruity in this speech, but he controlled himself and listened soberly. Henry went on: —

"If I could have handled it alone, or with only Spencer to help, you would never have got me. But with such a big business, I had to employ a good many men. That was my weak spot. I've known it all along and dreaded it, but I had to run the risk. There's a risk in every business, and that was the risk

in mine. No, sir, if I could have had competent men, I should be laughing to-day at the whole revenue system."

"I should take exception to that, Smiley," said Beveridge. "Your men weren't the only thing that gave you away, not by any means."

"Oh, weren't they?"

"No, the most important clew was the label you used. But say, Smiley, here is what puzzles me. Why is it that you, a man of unusual ability, haven't put in your time at something respectable? The brains and work you have wasted on smuggling would have made you a comfortable fortune in some other line."

"What do you mean by 'respectable,' Beveridge, — politics, trading, preaching?"

"I guess you recognize the distinction."

"On the contrary, I don't recognize it at all. I asked for information."

"Oh, well, there is no use opening up that question. We all know the difference between right and wrong, honesty and dishonesty."

"Do we? Do you?"

"I have always supposed I did."

"You're an unusual man. I congratulate you."

"See here, Smiley, this is interesting. You don't mean to say that you consider smuggling an honorable business?"

"Why not?"

"Why not! Why — why —"

"It might clear your ideas, Beveridge, to go into this question a little. Smuggling means, I suppose, the bringing of merchandise from, say, Canada to this country."

"Dutiable merchandise, yes."

"What makes it dutiable?"

"The law."

"What makes the law?"

"The law is made by the people."

"What people?"

"Oh, see here, Smiley, this —"

"No, wait a minute. The trouble with you is you don't do your own thinking; I'll do a little for you. Take an imaginary case: There is a little group of men in this country who manufacture, say, tacks. As every man should, they are looking out for their own interests. They are out to make money. The tacks mean nothing to them, except as

they can be turned into money. That is right and proper, isn't it?"

"Certainly."

"Now suppose, among them all, they employ a good many thousand men in their tack factories, all of them voters. Suppose they're rich, and ready to contribute a neat little sum to the campaign fund. Now then, if any other group of men start up, just over the Canadian line, where labor is cheaper, making tacks, and underselling our tack market, the natural thing for our tack men to do is to go to their representatives in Congress and say, 'Here, if you want our votes and our money, you must pass a law putting a duty on tacks.' Why do they say this? Because with such a law they can make more money. The people aren't helped by it, mind you; the people have to pay all the more. The only men to profit by it are the little group of tack manufacturers who want to get rich and fat at the expense of this public you talk about. Now do the Congressmen fall into line and pass the law? Certainly. Why? Because *they* are helped by it. They get the votes and the money contributions — and probably a neat bribe

besides. All this while, mind you, the people are out of the game. They are being robbed by a law that was made entirely to enrich a little group of men. These bribe givers and takers put up a job on us, the most dishonest kind of a job, and yet you seem to think I'm dishonest, too, because I follow their example and look out for number one."

"Hold on, Smiley, there's a fallacy there —"

"Where? Point it out. I'm doing an honest business. The stuff I sell is well made. Do you suppose I care what your government people think? Why, the whole government system is a network of bribes and rake-offs and private snaps."

"Of course, if you're an anarchist —"

"Look here, Beveridge, this talk seems to be rather personal — suppose we make it more so. Let's see if we can't find out what your motives are in this business. Are they Christian, or patriotic, or are you, like myself and the tack men, and the law-makers, looking out for number one? The man that was out here before you came I bought off. But it didn't take me long to see that you couldn't be bought. Now why? That's the question.

Was it because you have principles against it? Not at all. Don't get mad. I don't doubt a minute that you have some principles that you learned in Sunday-school; but Lord, when a man's grown up and has his living to fight for, do you think the Sunday-school has any chance. So, you see, I thought it over, and reasoned it out about like this: You and the other man were both ambitious, but where he wanted money, you want position. It's to your interest to keep the confidence of your superiors. That's why I couldn't buy you; it's all right, you've done a good job, but don't try to persuade yourself that your integrity is armor plate, that you've been doing right for the good of the Sunday-school or from patriotic motives. Just because you happen to be on the winning side, because your gang happens to be on top, don't make the mistake of thinking you're better than the rest of us. For you aren't."

Dick saw that Beveridge's tongue was trembling with a keen retort, and he broke in, "But you haven't told how I was worked into this, Henry."

"Oh, that's simple. I wanted to boost you along in the world, but you were young and

had notions. So I thought if I could once make you bring down a load of the stuff without knowing it, you would find yourself in for it, and then I could make you see things in the right proportions. I wanted you, bad. With one such man as you, I could have fooled them forever." He paused and added meditatively: "And I would have made you a rich man, Dick. But just when I had it arranged, you came and told me that you had gone daffy over Cap'n Fargo's little girl, and I saw I had as good as lost you. Yes, sir, I could have made your fortune. Well, anyhow, you'll get something out of it, after —"

Beveridge rose to go to his room, gathering up the papers. "I'm going to write this out now, boys. I'll see you later."

Late in the evening the statement was ready. Henry read it through, suggested a few emendations, and signed it. Then the three went on deck.

Far down on the southwestern horizon was a row of twinkling lights. Above them, in the sky, was spread a warm glow.

"We're getting along," said Henry. "There's Chicago."

"Oh, is it?" exclaimed Beveridge with interest.

"Yes. We'll soon be in. Isn't it about time to put the handcuffs on me?"

Beveridge smiled. "That will hardly be necessary."

"But Chicago's a bad town. I might get away from you."

"We won't worry about that."

"Do you carry the things on you? I never saw any."

Beveridge drew a pair from his hip pocket, and handed them to Henry.

"How do they work?"

"Easily. Slip them on — this way."

There was a click and Henry's hands were chained together.

"That's easy enough, isn't it?" said he, walking a few steps up and down the deck, surveying himself. Then he went to the rail and leaned on it, looking silently off toward the lights.

Just what came next, Dick never could remember. He had turned away to gaze at the alternating red-and-white lights that marked Grosse Pointe and home, so that he saw little

more than Henry's swift movement and Beveridge's start. An instant more and he was standing at the rail with Beveridge, in the place where Henry had been standing a moment before—gazing down at the foam that fell away from the bows. He heard the special agent sing out: "Stop her, stop her, Cap'n! Man overboard!" He was conscious that the engines had stopped; and he heard the Captain's voice from the bridge: "No use! He went under the wheel!" Then came the order to lower a boat, and the rush of feet across the deck.

CHAPTER XV

IN WHICH BEVERIDGE SURPRISES HIMSELF

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DICK and Beveridge stood on the wharf at Chicago. The lights that wavered over their faces from the lanterns of the *Foote* and from the arc lamp overhead showed them sober, silent. The *camaraderie* of the chase and of the voyage that followed had ceased to be. Beveridge's elation had been subdued by the distressing event of the evening, but still the mind behind his decorously quiet face was teeming with plans and schemes. Dick was gloomy, bewildered. Both seemed to be waiting for something. They stood watching the bustle aboard the revenue cutter as the crew made her snug for the night, until finally Dick spoke: —

"You haven't told me yet what I'm to do next, Bill."

"What you're to do next?"

"Why — yes. You see — "

"Go on. I'm listening."

But Dick found it hard to go on. "I didn't know but what — "

Beveridge turned abruptly at a noise up the street, placed two fingers in his mouth, and whistled. And after a moment Dick saw what had kept him waiting. It was no sense of delicacy. Beveridge had been looking for a carriage. "Get in, Smiley," he said, when the driver pulled up.

"Get in?"

"Yes — after you."

"You mean, then — "

"Well, what?"

"I didn't suppose after what has happened that you'd need me any longer."

"Not need you, Smiley?" They were seated within the vehicle now, the door was shut, and the driver, the special agent's whispered word in his ear, was whipping up his horses. "I'm afraid you don't understand. I have no authority to let you off."

It was his manner more than his words that suddenly swept away Dick's delicacy and

aroused his anger. "The hell you haven't!" was his reply.

"Certainly not."

"You don't expect me to believe that. You have no case against me now."

"I grant you that. And I can promise you that you won't be detained more than a few days at the outside. But this business has passed up out of my hands now. All I can do is to deliver you up, make my report, and set the machinery in motion for your release.

Dick sat motionless, gazing into the shadows before him. "What right had you to let Pink go, then?"

"That was different."

"How? — How?"

"Nobody ever looked on Harper as of any importance in the business."

"That is no answer. You're holding me on a technicality. The importance of the man makes no difference when you are dealing in red tape."

"See here, Smiley, don't you think you had better stop abusing me, and take a sensible view of it?"

As he spoke, they were crossing State Street,

and the brighter light illuminated the interior of the carriage. For reply, Dick turned and looked at his custodian, looked him through and through with a gaze of profound contempt. Words were not necessary; Beveridge saw that Dick had fathomed his motives, Dick saw that he was understood. At the moment neither was thinking of the gloomy city that was closing in around them; for both saw the wide, free beach, the gleaming lake, the two long piers, the quaint little house on stilts, the upper balcony with its burden of forget-me-nots and geraniums and all the blossoms that Annie loved. And both had in their nostrils the refreshing smell of the east wind — made up of all the faint mingled odors of Lake Michigan — a little pine in it, a little fish in it, but, more than all, the health and strength and wholesome sweetness of the Lakes. And both were silent while the carriage rattled along, while they stepped out, crossed the walk, and entered a stone building with barred windows, while, with Beveridge on one side and a guard on the other, Dick walked to his cell.

Beveridge caught the half-past eight train for Lakeville the next morning, and walked

straight down to the house on stilts. Annie was out on the lake, her mother said, looking at him, while she said it, and after, with doubtful, questioning eyes. So he sat down on the steps and looked out over the beach and the water. It was a fine warm day, with just breeze enough to ripple the lake from shore to horizon, and set it sparkling in the sun. The sky was blue and white; and the cloud shadows here and there on the water took varied and varying colors — deep blue, yellow, sea-green. The shore-line dwindled off to the northward in long scallops, every line of the yellow beach cut out cleanly, every oak on the bluff outlined sharply. In truth, it was a glorious day — just the day Beveridge would have chosen had the choice been his — the day of days, on which he was to make the last arrangements in clinching his success, in assuring his future. Annie had gone out to the nets with her father. She was, at the moment, rowing him in. On other days Beveridge had sat here and watched her coming in from the nets, with a great box of whitefish aboard.

The boat grounded on the sand. Captain Fargo stepped out and drew it up. Beveridge

rose and smiled lazily while he waited for Annie to come up to the steps. The sun had been in her eyes, and at first she did not see him distinctly.

"Well," said Beveridge, "hello! Didn't expect to see me, did you?"

She stopped abruptly and looked at him. He did not know just how to interpret her expression.

"Aren't you going to speak to me, Annie?"

Her answer, when it came, blanketed him, and left him, so to speak, flapping in the wind. She said, "What have you done with Dick?"

"Dick? Why — oh, he's all right."

"Why hasn't he been back?"

"He'll be around all right. They thought it would be necessary to hold him for a few days."

"To hold him, — where?"

"Don't you see —"

"Is he in prison?"

"Yes, but that will be fixed —"

"In Chicago?"

"Yes, he —"

"Father," said she, "Dick's in prison. We must go down to see him." And she turned

back to Beveridge with the question, "When can we get a train?"

What could Beveridge do but fumble in his pockets, bring out a handful of papers, look them over until he found a time-table, and announce that the next train was the ten-twelve?

"You will have to show us how to get there, Mr. Beveridge," said Annie. "Come and change your clothes, father. Will you wait here, Mr. Beveridge?"

Beveridge said that he would, certainly. And then when father and daughter had hurried into the house, and after Captain Fargo had turned his box of fish over to a boy who acted on occasions as his helper, the special agent sat down again and looked at the Lake. The sun was shining on, bright as ever; the water was still varicolored, the sky still blue-and-white; but he saw them not.

In something more than twenty minutes Annie was down and waiting impatiently for her father. Her whole mind was bent on getting to town. She hardly saw Beveridge. As for him, chagrined as he was, he had to admit that she looked very pretty in her trim

blue gown. He had never before seen her dressed for the city. He was inclined to feel awed as well as bewildered. Then, finally, appeared the Captain in his Sunday clothes. And the three set out for the train and Dick.

All the way Annie was preoccupied. Hardly a word could Beveridge get. From the train they hurried over to the stone building with the barred windows. Here the special agent held a short, whispered conversation which ended in the unbarring of doors and the word to follow down a corridor. And finally the last door was opened and Dick stood before them, dishevelled, unshaven, but indisputably Dick. Beveridge found himself slipping into the background when Annie and the prisoner were clasping hands without a word; but he watched them. He saw the question in Dick's eyes, — the something deep and burning, the something that was *not* a question, in Annie's. He saw that she did not think of withdrawing her hand; he knew that in one short moment more her arms would be thrown around Dick's neck. He turned away, and, leaving them there, walked out into the street.

The lights were out at "The Teamster's Friend." It was ten o'clock at night, and from Stenzenberger's lumber office on one corner through to the corner at the farther end of the block the street was deserted. But Beveridge, who slowly turned the corner by the lumber yard, — Beveridge, who had passed the most turbulent day of his life trying to realize that he had lost Annie, — knew where to look. Lonely, miserable, plunged into dejection now that the strain was over, he turned into the driveway that led to the sheds in the rear of the saloon, and, pausing, looked up. Yes, there was a light in the upper rear window. He whistled. The curtain went up a little way — some one was looking down. The curtain went down again; the light slowly disappeared, leaving grotesque shadows on the curtain as it was carried from the room. Steps sounded in the hall; the bolt slipped back, and Madge stood in the doorway.

"Hello," said Beveridge. "Here I am."

"Oh," cried Madge, with what sounded like a gasp of relief. She drew him quickly in, closed and locked the door, and stood looking at him.

"I had to go out of town, Madge. I didn't get in till late last night. I have some news for you."

"Come in," she said. And they went back into the dining room, where she had set down the lamp. They took chairs on opposite sides of the table. Madge rested her elbows on the red cloth, propped her chin on her two hands, and waited. Beveridge, while he looked at her, was rapidly getting back his self-possession.

"Well, Madge, there's a good deal to tell you. McGlory —"

She waited as long as she could, then exclaimed, in an uncertain voice: "What about him? Where is he?"

"He's gone."

"Where?"

"Nobody on earth can tell you that."

She leaned across the table and caught his arm. "Is he dead?"

"Yes, dead — and buried."

She leaned back in her chair. She could not take her eyes from his face, and yet she said nothing. It could not be said that her face showed a trace of happiness, but there was, nevertheless, a strange sort of relief there.

For a long time neither spoke. But Beveridge's impetuous nature could not long endure this silence. "Well, Madge," he broke out, "do you still want me?"

She did not answer.

"That's what I've come to know. If you'll do it, we will be married to-night."

"You couldn't—" her voice was low and dreamy. "You couldn't get a license before to-morrow," she said.

"It's queer," said Dick, "but that is the Beveridge of it. You can't tell what he is going to do next. I don't believe he knows himself half the time."

The *Captain*, with Annie at the tiller and Dick stretched lazily out beside her, was skimming and bounding along off the Grosse Pointe light.

"Wasn't it—" Annie wore a conscious expression—"wasn't it rather sudden?"

"It must have been. But that is Beveridge."

"And she was a saloon keeper's wife?"

"Yes,—but it wasn't so bad as it sounds when you say it that way. She was too good for McGlory."

"Oh, you — you know her?"

"I've seen her, yes."

"But isn't she — old?"

"Not so very. She can't be much older than Beveridge. She is good looking — almost pretty. And she looks sort of — well, when you saw her there in McGlory's place, it seemed too bad. She was quiet, and she looked as if she was made for something better."

They were silent for a time. Then their eyes met, and she missed his answering smile. "What is it, Dick?" she asked.

"I was thinking about Henry — about what he was, and then what he did for me. We have everything to thank him for, you and I, Annie." He paused, then went on. "I suppose he was wrong — he must have been wrong if we are to believe in law at all. But that night on the steamer, when he was telling us about it, I watched him and Beveridge both pretty closely, — the expression of their faces and their eyes. The way a man looks at you tells so much, Annie. And I knew all the while, though Beveridge was standing there for the law, and Henry for what they call crime, still — "

"What, Dick?"

"—if I were in a tight place again and had to choose which of those two men to trust my life with, I shouldn't need to stop to think. It would be Henry, every time."

He sat up to shift his position, when something which he saw on the northern horizon drove the clouds from his face. This was a great day for Dick. "Look, Annie!" He was pointing eagerly. "Look there!"

"Where?"

"Can't you see it — the *Anne?*"

Then Annie's heart leaped too. And she ordered Dick to ease off the sheet, adding only, "We'll meet her, shan't we?" To which Dick responded with a nod.

So they headed north, with everything drawing full and the bubbles dancing by. Pink saw them and came up into the wind. The *Captain* slipped alongside, a sailor caught the painter, Dick handed Annie up, clambered after, stepped to the wheel, and they swung slowly off.

"Make the boat fast astern," called Dick to one of the revenue cutter men.

"All right, sir."

"Things gone all right, Pink?"

"First class. Not much wind in the Straits."

"I hardly thought there would be."

Annie was perched on the cabin trunk, looking at Dick with laughing eyes. She enjoyed watching him, she liked his easy way of falling into the command of his schooner, she admired the muscles on his forearm (for he had rolled up his sleeves). He caught her glance. "Want to take her, Annie?"

"Oh, yes, Dick. Will you let me?"

"If you want to."

So Annie took the wheel. She stood there, a merry, graceful figure, — though Dick kept close by and reached out a steadying hand now and then, — while the schooner came about, headed for the long pier, ran up neatly into her berth, threw out her lines, and stopped, her voyage over.

[NOTE: — In the spring, when the ice broke up in the streams of Michigan, a party of lumbermen found what had been the body of a man lying in a shallow creek, deep in the forest. Particulars would be unpleasant. It is enough to say that they buried him there, being rough men and far from a coroner; and that on a water-soaked envelope in his pocket was found a name which, as nearly as anything, seemed to spell "Roche." To the persons of this tale his end remained

a mystery. It might be added that Beveridge found more difficulty than he had foreseen in weaving his net around Stenzenberger. In fact the special agent had failed, at last accounts, to disturb the serenity of the lumber dealer, in spite of the moral certainty that his share in the guilt was the largest of any. Perhaps his secret went to the bottom of Lake Michigan with Henry Smiley. — S. M.]

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